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JUNE ISSUE 017

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Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX

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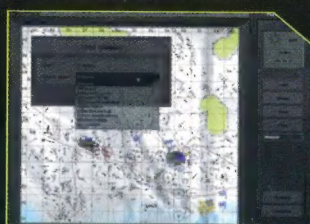
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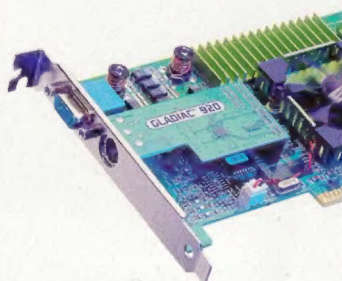
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Wrestling

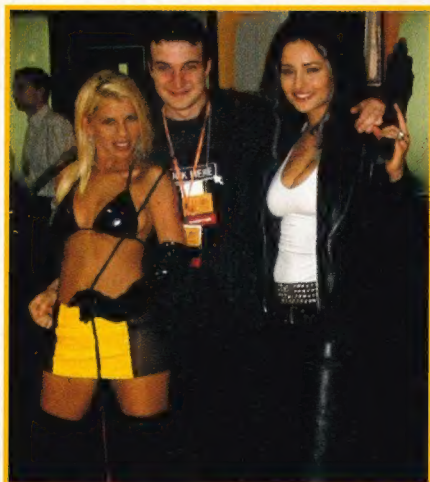
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Editor's note



E3 sees battle lines drawn

November is shaping up to be an interesting month in the US. It'll see Nintendo and Microsoft going head-to-head to take an early lead in the next-generation race; one with a track record of success, the other a young newcomer with strong financial backing. Gamecube has the cheaper price and, at this stage, much more impressive games - Xbox has superior hardware and third-party support, and the muscle of one of the world's largest corporations behind it.

Hardcore gamers, who will probably buy both systems, will find it an expensive week. Expect the Gamecube to feature prominently on kiddies' Christmas lists, thanks to Nintendo's heritage of catering for younger gamers. Xbox will appeal more to older gamers, particularly the sizeable PC crossover market, and to those looking for more than a pure games machine, due to its DVD drive and easy broadband connectivity.

Right now the most likely outcome is that the GC will enjoy initial sales success, but the Xbox has too much hardware potential to be eclipsed for long. The second generation of Xbox games on show behind closed doors at E3 was scarily impressive, and genuinely novel and innovative, rather than the traditional Nintendo diet of samey Rare platformers and interminable franchises.

Maybe the real battle will be fought over Internet support. Is the console market finally ready for online gaming? Time will tell.

Mike Smith
Editor

What's the score?



GDO carries marks out of ten on each review. Here's how it works. We are prepared to offer 10s (which bring a gold award) to only a few select games. Our criteria for this are as follows: it must meet the standards of its time in every area, excel in at least one, and not fall down in any; it must contain at least one element which can be described as "exceptional"; and it must also contain significant originality and assure long-term gameplay.

Marks of 9 (which get silver awards) are given to games which fall short of the above criteria due to one or two minor flaws, and specifically for games which meet the Gold criteria but don't offer a significant quantity of originality and/or innovation. An 8 or a 7 is still a good mark, and if the game appeals to you it should be well worth buying.

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WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT? The GDO posse reveal all

Thankfully the crew aren't literally revealing all - that would be hideous, and unsuitable for a reputable publication such as this. Instead, they tell us what's filling their spare time this month.



Currently playing: Gran Turismo 3 A-spec

Gareth appeared at work one morning red-faced with anger. "The postman wouldn't give me my GT3 copy," he fumed. "I had to wait all weekend to play it." So he disappeared into the games room and wasn't seen for three days. He emerged, bleary-eyed dribbling slightly, and muttering, "This is the best game ever."



Currently playing: Red Faction (PS2)

Jayne's Red Faction antics have caused the rest of the team problems this month. Inspired by this new PS2 game, she's taken to blowing her way through walls. She hasn't let the scarcity of explosives in civilised society discourage her either, and has started receiving odd phone calls from Irish men. So, no change there, then.



Currently playing: Moving House

James had a month's notice to find a new flat, but still managed to leave everything to the last minute. His ensuing stress levels caused much hilarity. So how's the new place working out, James? "It gets soggy when it rains, and there's nowhere to plug my PC into," he complained. Unwanted cardboard boxes to the usual address.



Currently playing: Gran Turismo 3 A-spec

Thanks to Gareth's departure to E3, Matt's finally managed to get his mitts on GT3, which is, as he puts it, "Simply the gnat's sack". When he's not playing GT3, he's been rummaging around in his groin area. Apparently it's got something to do with a possible hernia. Very suspect.

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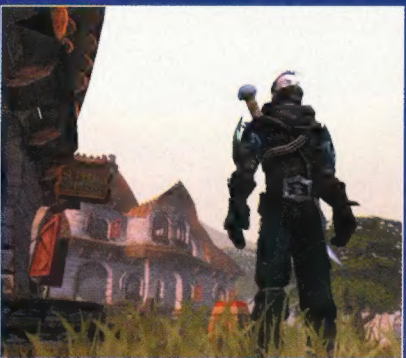
Sega looking good

Sega demonstrated a healthy line-up of software at E3 for the year ahead. Highlights included: Jet Set Radio, Sega GT 2002 and Crazy Taxi Next (tentative title) for the Xbox; Phantasy Star Online 2 and Virtua Striker for the Gamecube; and Virtua Fighter 4 for the PlayStation2.



Bring it on

THQ's eagerly-anticipated WWF Smackdown: Just Bring It was playable for the first time at E3. The follow-up to the hugely successful WWF Smackdown series on the PlayStation is only 30 per cent complete, but is already shaping up to be another million-plus seller when it is released in the autumn.



Molyneux's ego

Project Ego, an Xbox RPG in development at Big Blue Box, a satellite studio of Peter Molyneux's Lionhead company, was unveiled at E3. Among the game's features are a rumour system, where non-player characters pass on information about your accomplishments, and a number of graphical niceties including a character who tans when standing in the sun.

62,000 FLOCK TO E3



The seventh annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) drew to a close at the Los Angeles Convention Centre on May 19 after two days of frantic publicity seeking by the world's biggest games companies.

According to the show's owner - the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) - a staggering 62,000 journalists, developers and publishers from more than 70 countries visited the event where over 400 exhibitors showcased thousands of computer and video games.

More than 750 of titles were debuted at the expo which is famed for its business deals, major announcements and lavish parties.

According to an E3 pre-show exhibitor survey, approximately 80 per cent of the games seen at the show are set for release before Christmas 2001. They ranged from Final Fantasy X on PlayStation2, Crazy Taxi 2 and Shenmue II on Dreamcast to Duke Nukem Forever on PC.

Other highlights included the announcements of crucial Xbox and Gamecube launch details and news of Sony's online strategy for the PlayStation2.

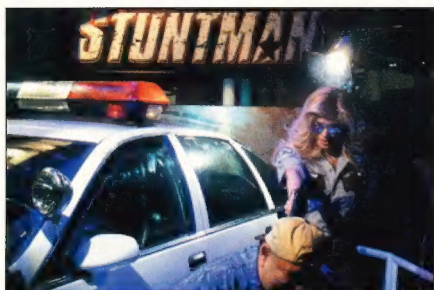
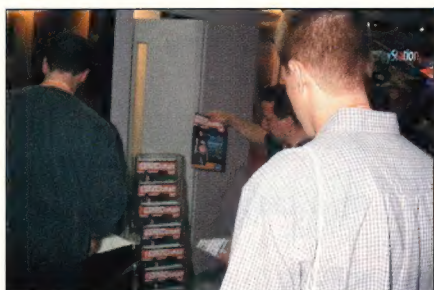
For the whole E3 2001 story, turn to page 38 for our in-depth feature written from the heart of the event itself.

Xbox and GC prices revealed

Microsoft and Nintendo have announced the US launch dates and recommended retail prices of their next generation consoles, sparking off an all-out console war.

The Gamecube will launch on November 5 for \$199, while the Xbox will hit US stores slightly later on November 8, 2001 for \$299 - the same as the current price of the PlayStation2. These prices are likely to translate into £199 and £299 respectively when launched in the UK, but there was no definite information given on UK pricing by either company. It was also revealed that Gamecube games will cost \$49.99; Xbox games will cost the same.

Unfortunately, no specific dates were set for either console in Europe, although Spring 2002 was mentioned by both. The news made the Gamecube's Japanese debut date of September 14, 2001 seem almost irrelevant to the US gaming press.



Eidos sure-fire hits bolster PS2

Eidos has unveiled two titles certain to bolster the PlayStation2's release list.

First comes Deus Ex, which will be released this winter. Having already proven itself with a BAFTA award for Best PC Game of 2000, the PS2 port will include improved visuals with higher polygon counts.

Second is the announcement of Timesplitters 2, the sequel to Radical Design's critically acclaimed first-person shoot 'em up, set for release in Spring 2002. Timesplitters 2 features an overhauled game engine, rewritten animation, more in-depth single and co-operative game modes plus support for the I-link cable to link multiple PS2s together.

David Doak, Managing Director of Free Radical Design revealed: "With Timesplitters we were just finding our feet. Now we can go to town and show people what we're really capable of doing."

Bioware and Verant use force



Both Bioware's AD&D-based RPG Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic and Verant's massively-multiplayer Star Wars: Galaxies received their first showing at E3, albeit behind closed doors.

Both these games were among the highlights of the show for many people, and both featured fantastic visuals and varied gameplay.

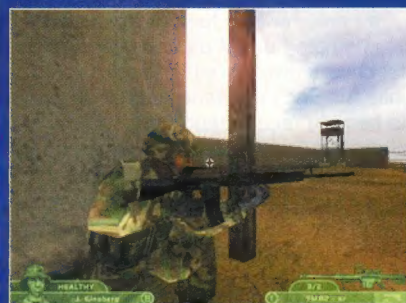
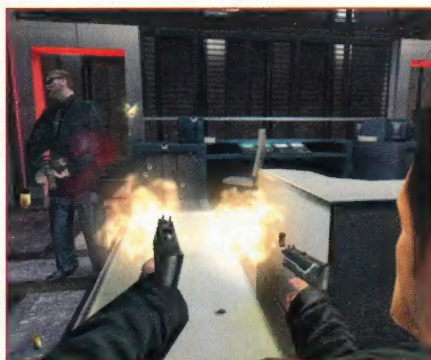
Knights of the Old Republic follows the tried-and-tested Bioware RPG format, as seen with the Baldur's Gate games, but uses a full 3D engine and a different character system to tell its story. Galaxies, being developed by the creators of popular RPG Everquest, features a skills-based (rather than experience-based) advancement system and an all-new 3D engine. We'll bring you more on both games next issue.

Expect to receive Payne soon

In development for close to four years by Finnish developers Remedy, and hyped for at least the last two, Max Payne, the "Hollywood-film-noir-Matrix-style" action game is nearly complete.

It was shown to attendees at E3 in a playable form, where Remedy emphasised the strong story and character development aspects of the game.

Using all the usual tricks of movies that like to tug on the heartstrings, Max Payne aims to set up a stronger than usual emotional tie to the character, and which Remedy hopes will be motivation for seeing the game through to the end. The story will be told in various formats, from in-game cut-scenes to a narrated comic-book approach.



Ghost seen at E3

On show at Ubi Soft's stand was the latest instalment in the Rainbow Six series of tactical first-person shooters. Ghost Recon has an all-new engine, raising its visuals to levels comparable with recent similar games, if not quite up to the standards of other, more advanced games at the show. The gameplay has moved away from previous titles' heavy emphasis on complex mission planning towards more instant action.



Garriot's new venture

Ultima creator Richard Garriott ("Lord British") chose E3 to announce his new venture, a company called Destination Games, presently developing an MMORPG called Lineage: The Blood Pledge. Many of Destination Games' employees have come from redundancy-hit Origin, which Garriott left earlier this year. Lineage will be a free download, but charge higher-than-usual subscription fees.



Sims to go online

Following the runaway success of The Sims, EA has announced a sequel, The Sims Online, which will allow players to control a Sim in a persistent, online world. Sims can build a network of friends and form shared houses, neighbourhoods, businesses and clubs.

CHEATS

You only have to look at the steroid-chomping world of athletics to see that cheats prosper all of the time. But while we don't condone the use of drugs, we heartily recommend the performance-enhancing Games Domain Offline cheats section. And to help out when you're really stuck, we've introduced our new tips, tricks and technical support hotlines (see below). Now, no matter what game you're stuck on, we'll make sure that you come through your pickle smelling of roses. Our 'no call waiting', live advice lines are so spectacularly helpful that we offer a full money-back guarantee if you are dissatisfied with the results.



Rumble Racing - PS2

Unlock cars:

Password:

BSUIGASUM
NALDSHSD
OPSRISUC
AMHBRAAMH
UBTKCKSTOH
VTYANIYTT
HGIROLREL
KCEROCTEC
PTOATRT01
ABOGOB0GA
1AREXT1AR

Car:

Gamecus
XXS Tomcat
Sporticus
Stinger
Buckshot
Van Itty
High Roller
Redneck Rocket
Revolution
Road Trip
Vortex



Tropico - PC

Hold down the **[CTRL]** button while you enter the cheat. If you want to use the cheat more than once, release **[CTRL]**, re-press it, and enter the code again.

Code

pesos
contento

Result

Add \$20,000
Increase 'Happiness' by ten



Batman: Chaos in Gotham - Game Boy Color

Level passwords:

- 2 - Batman, Batmobile, Batman, Batcycle
- 3 - Batman, Batcycle, Batgirl, Batcycle
- 4 - Batmobile, Batmobile, Batman, Batmobile
- 5 - Batmobile, Batcycle, Batgirl, Batgirl
- 6 - Batcycle, Batcycle, Batman, Batgirl
- 7 - Batcycle, Batgirl, Batgirl, Batman
- 8 - Batgirl, Batcycle, Batman, Batmobile
- 9 - Batgirl, Batgirl, Batmobile, Batcycle



Men in Black 2 - Game Boy Color

Level passwords:

- 2 - MTTH
- 3 - STVN
- 4 - SPDM
- 5 - BTHH
- 6 - BBYH
- 7 - MRLL
- 8 - MMDD



Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX - PSX

Mat Hoffman moves:

Superman seatgrab truck driver:

Left, Left, Circle

Decade air:

Right, Right, Circle

No-footed one-handed candybar:

Left, Right, Circle

One-handed swing leg:

Right, Right, Square

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Every month we will give the reader who sends in the best letter a game of their choice*- so get scribbling!

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*prize games will be up to a value of £50 and subject to availability and whether full contact details are provided

SILENCE SEGA ZEALOTS

Your mag is a pleasure to read, but what a pile of crap the letters page in the March edition was. [We had rather a hot response from some quarters to our 'Sega Ditches Dreamcast' feature - Ed.] Those Sega fans (yes, FANATICS!) sound more like football hooligans than gamers.

I play games to enjoy and to entertain me. I've played most consoles in my time; it doesn't matter what the brand is so long as I enjoyed the game. Besides, why not rejoice, you Sega zealots, that Sega will now be making games on more formats. When more people play Sega games (i.e. PS2 owners like me) more people will worship the name 'SEGA'. (You can have more than one God - the Romans did!)

Dave Wright

Tamworth, Staffs

GDO says:

We couldn't agree more Dave. It was interesting to note that most of the correspondence about our Dreamcast article appeared to have been written by Bernard Manning - judging by the four-letter word content at least. Never mind, they appear to have calmed down now and we promise we'll be nice about the white elephant that is the Dreamcast from now on. (Joke!)

GREY HAIR MAKES ME FEEL OLD

Being a fan and player of PlayStation I was obviously excited at the sound of a new Sony console. I was glad to hear that the PlayStation2 was to be released but disappointed at its cost. £300 is a hell of a lot of money for a console so I got worried that all good games are going to be on PlayStation2. I just wanted to know if great games are still going to be released for my little grey friend, PlayStation.

Every time I read a magazine like Games Domain I always see a fantastic looking game. By the time I've read the articles on the game I say to myself 'Whoa! I'm gonna get this game!' At the peak of my excitement I am battered down by the fact that this game is for PlayStation2.

I've been disappointed in hearing that Metal Gear Solid 2, Unreal Tournament and Smackdown 3 are all for the new big shot PlayStation2.

All I'm asking is this question: Is PlayStation gonna be forgotten?

Sean Cope

Pontypridd, South Wales

GDO says:

Well it depends what you're after really. The PlayStation is still selling strongly but as time progresses it will most likely become a machine that is aimed at the younger gamer. Expect basic, bargain-bin releases designed to capture the lower end of the age range while the PS2's superior power is utilised for the top-billing titles. Sorry Sean, but you've got to move on. Let it go. The PS2 is backwards-compatible after all so you can still play your fave PlayStation games. And time's a great healer.

GAYMES MEK YOO KLEVA

So the Hom Offiss riport sez that gayms mek yoo mor intilijent eh? Wel, tel uz somfink we dynt no awlredddy!

I've bin playin the Nyntedo, Pleystayshun und peesee fir ove tem yers an eye kan onesty sae itsh dun me no hirm wotzoevor!

I hav a GSE in woodwerk and a stiffkate frum them syklin profishunty peebles. Alsew a bloo peetering baj.

Micky Munkhus

Norfwitch

P.S. Plez sente mi al dem old gems wot yoos dont went, chers!

GDO says:

Good to see you've been unaffected by your game playing Micky. The Home Office report is definitely right: take the Games Domain staff as an example. Among our 6,732 employees we've got two A-levels (home economics and general studies) and an NVQ in needlework. And most of us can even tie our own shoelaces and dress ourselves too. By the way, du u wont a job ednitig GDO?

Star Letter

CONSOLE ME!

The PlayStation2 has been released for five months now, but the only things that I could hold up as greatness are Star Wars Starfighter and a Metal Gear Solid 2 demo.

But more worrying than this though is that there's very little on the horizon to suggest that this will still be the console to own in six or seven years time like the PS One, which at £70 seems like the more attractive proposal. Also, a very cheap Dreamcast is catching gamers attention away from the PS2, mainly because they just aren't willing to part with £300+ for nothing more than an unproven DVD player.

In addition to this, with the Gamecube and Microsoft's Xbox (with its huge capital) breathing heavily down Sony's necks it had better start pulling its finger out and some must-have games.

What's also worrying me is that the consoles of the future don't now look certain to appear. For example, Sega has no plans for a new console, the Xbox has run into trouble with its failure to get Japanese support and Nintendo has threatened not to bring out the Gamecube at all if it doesn't go down well at E3. To top it all off Sony isn't performing. I can't see where my next purchase of a high quality console is going to come from. Is the videogame market coming to a very untimely end?

Matthew Steele
Cheshire



PS2 expensive?

GDO says:

Hey, hey. Come on Matthew. It's not the end of the world - although you make a strong argument for all gamers to put wet tea-towels on their heads right now and head for the hills (or something).

Your bleak prognosis may prove correct but we think it's more likely the PS2 will become a huge success story with some amazing titles. With some of the strong franchises owned by Nintendo (Pokémon, Mario etc) it's pretty certain the Gamecube will be something special as well. As for the Xbox, Microsoft seems hell-bent on ensuring its new project take over the planet. So cheer up - the future of gaming has never looked brighter.

SPEAKER SYSTEM STILL UP FOR GRABS!

Listen up if you like it LOUD! Because of a technical problem we have been unable to retrieve entries to our 'Now Hear This' speakers and amp competition which we ran in the February issue of GDO. This means that we still have a Yamaha VS-10 DTS Dolby Digital amplifier and Yamaha NX-SW 5.1 channel speaker system up for grabs. That's £400 worth of red-hot, boom-shake-the-room equipment! To make up for our technical glitch, and keep those happy who entered the original competition, we will give every entrant this time round a free game from our vault of classic titles*. So get scribbling - this offer is write-in only. All you have to do is send a postcard to: Hi-fi Competition Mark II, Games Domain, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS. Good luck everyone - this is one competition you can't lose! (Offer closes June 30)

* For the purposes of this offer, what constitutes a 'classic game' will be entirely at the discretion of the editor. These games will be despatched subject to availability and only to entrants who supply a full address and postcode. GDO will not be liable for games that are lost in the post.

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FEATURING THE TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER™ GAME ENGINE



IN STORES MAY 2001

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PC GAMES

SECTION

PIPELINES PREVIEWS REVIEWS

E3 provides a strong PC showing



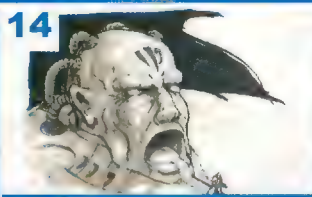
Mike Smith
Editor

Rumours of the death of PC gaming have been greatly exaggerated. Despite strong showings from the console manufacturers (notably Nintendo), those E3 attendees who took the time to check out many of the PC games on show couldn't fail to be impressed by their diversity and innovation. Even Microsoft put together a convincing selection of PC titles alongside the more disappointing Xbox displays.

Companies like Ubi Soft, Lucas Arts, Westwood, EA and Activision all had strong, class-leading games on show, and the graphical advances made over the last 12 months were made evident by almost all of them. This year also saw a greater focus on online games, with many new and interesting massively-multiplayer titles being showcased. The next 12 months will see some fantastic releases.

mike@gamesdomain.com

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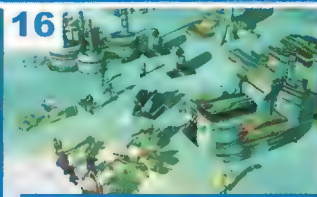
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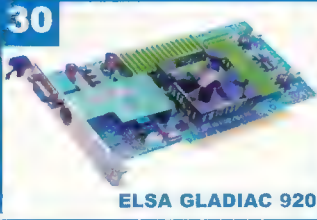
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ELSA GLADIAC 920

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Everyone's coming
to Games Domain



■ PUBLISHER: EA ■ DEVELOPER: WESTWOOD ■ RELEASE: TBC

Red Alert 2: Yuri's Revenge

Westwood's largest expansion project is already looking good



■ Yuri Recruitment Centre - a barracks for the Psychic Army, built in the image of Yuri

You have a best-selling game, slickly presented with a great, imaginative background setting. What do you do? Some companies call it a one-off and move on to other things. Many companies will attempt to create a franchise and milk it with new expansions and sequels (and good on them - developing games that are prone to selling in high numbers is the only thing that will keep the PC games industry thriving).

"This is the sort of work you might reasonably expect from an entirely new project"

If you're Westwood, you take the latter route to an extreme extent with an 'Expand and Conquer' philosophy that gets printed, laminated, framed and hung in every employee's office. So we imagine, anyway.

And with that, it's inevitable that the ultra-successful 2D RTS Red Alert 2 is soon to spawn a new expansion disk continuing the story. The difference this time, however, is that it's actually what Westwood calls the largest expansion project they've ever undertaken. Indeed, not only is the standard promise of new

units, single-player campaigns, multiplayer features and an hour of new between-mission cutscenes out there; in an unprecedented move, they're also planning to include an entirely new side, bringing the total up to three. The game engine aside (which also promises to be enhanced), this is the sort of work you might reasonably expect to be put into an entirely new project altogether.

The expansion pack follows on from where the Allied victory left off ("the good guys always win," says Westwood). The fate of Yuri, the psychotic psychic warrior previously on the Soviet's side, was left unknown, but now he's back with his own army in Yuri's Revenge. The 14-mission single-player campaign sends the player back in time to unravel Yuri's plans as either the Allies or Soviets. There are also ten new co-operative missions playable online or over LAN. Yuri's side will be controllable in standard multiplayer games.

New additions also include a total of 30 units and structures, as well as a host of exotic locales that consist of "cities all over the Earth and beyond".

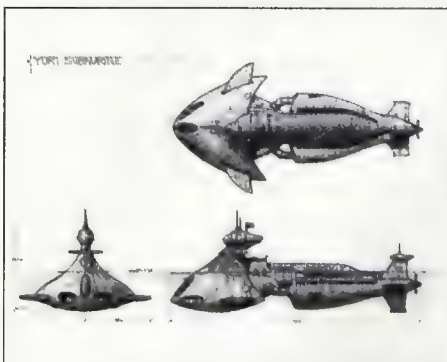
So far, so good. We'll keep you posted.



A mining vehicle, complete with its own built-in refinery



■ Virus - This femme fatale is a sniper who can fire virulent needle-darts at soldiers



■ Boomer - a deep-water submarine that can bombard shore targets with torpedos

Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds

Lucas Arts has another stab at Star Wars strategy, but can we feel the force?



The 3D look used in Force Commander has been dropped for an old-school 2D approach

Last year's *Star Wars: Force Commander* was, let's be honest, a real mess. Though the idea - a 3D real-time strategy game based in the *Star Wars* universe - was a fantastic one, the design and execution left a lot to be desired. Bad graphics and a worse interface meant not many people had the patience to get involved in crushing the Rebel scum, or fighting the great Imperial war machine, for that matter.

"Don't fancy playing as a Jedi? Then go to war as a Wookiee"

So let's hope Lucas Arts has learned some lessons from *Force Commander*, as it's just announced the sequel, entitled *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds*. It certainly looks like Lucas Arts has been doing some serious thinking - the 3D look has been dropped in favour of an old-school 2D approach, courtesy of Ensemble's Age of Empires engine, though at first glance the bar across the bottom of the screen looks similar to the first game.

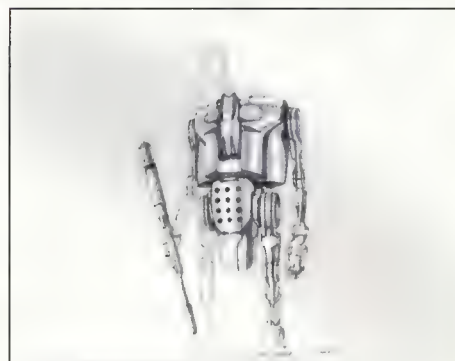
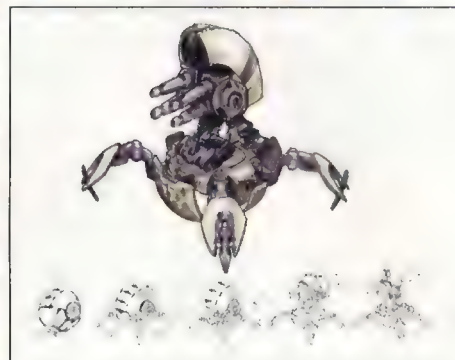
The game will let you take command of six

Star Wars races - the Galactic Empire, Rebel Alliance, Wookiees, Gungans, Royal Naboo and Trade Federation, and cover the time periods of all four films. It boasts over 300 different units, including Jedi Knights, Stormtroopers, X-Wings, AT-ATs, Snowspeeders, Wookiee Kas Tanks and Droids. Units can be upgraded, by using elements such as "Wookiee ingenuity, advanced Gungan biotechnology and Jedi stamina," though it's not completely clear how this will

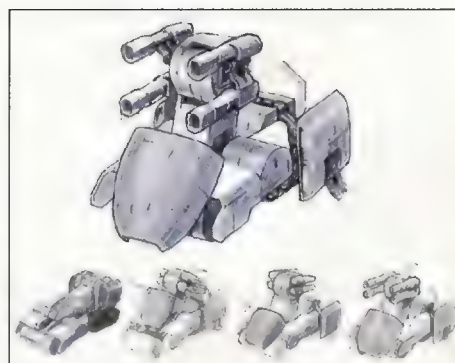
work in practice. Wookiee ingenuity in the films only ever seemed to go as far as hitting things and throwing hydrosplanners at Harrison Ford.

You'll be able to conduct battles over terrains as diverse as interstellar asteroids, submerged cities and conventional ground battles. Aerial combat will also feature. There will be a scenario generator, to create custom battlefields for single or multiplayer encounters.

A release date for *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds* has yet to be announced, but our money would be on sometime before Christmas. We'll give you more as soon as we have it.



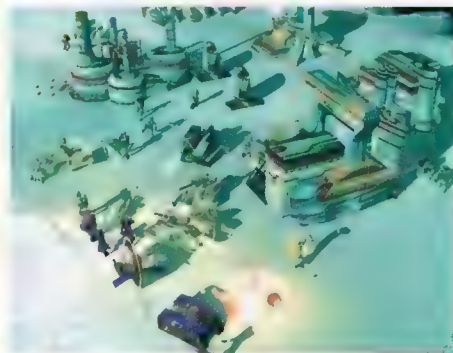
■ The game boasts over 300 different units



■ Aerial combat will feature alongside a diverse range of land-based battles

Emperor: Battle for Dune

Westwood's return to the planet Arrakis bodes well for Dune fans



■ Westwood's return to the Dune universe is depicted in full 3D



■ Each House is dominated by its own unique visual style

The screen goes black. A deep, gravely voiceover right out of the trailer for a high-budget Hollywood action flick cuts in. "Nearly a decade ago," it booms, "Westwood Studios ushered in one of the most popular gaming categories to date - real-time strategy. After a distinguished list of hit titles, Westwood Studios will revitalise the real time strategy genre... only this time in full 3D."

Westwood certainly has a sense of the dramatic and the buzz surrounding the Command and Conquer developer's return to Frank

"It's like meeting an old mate after years apart to find they're looking better than ever"

Herbert's Dune universe has been electric. After two years of development, the game is now close to completion. EA toured the press circuit with the latest build - how's it looking?

It's like meeting up with an old friend after years apart and finding that they have lost 20 pounds, toned up, and are sporting a more fashionable wardrobe. Underneath all that gloss though, there is still the old familiarity. The interface is pure Command and Conquer, so if you've played through any of the C&C or Red Alert titles, you'll probably pick up the controls without even a sniff of the manual.

The move to 3D has really added to the game's

look and atmosphere. In the single player campaign, the first battles take place on the desert planet of Arrakis, where the factions brave the deadly sandworms to mine the priceless spice. From the outset, you are amazed at just how much attention to detail there is. The huge hulking structures cast long shadows on the varied landscapes and each House is dominated by a particular visual style. The dark satanic mills of the Harkonnen, the majestic gold and blue eagle symbolism of the Atreides and the futuristic cities of the Ordos all stand out against the lush looking backgrounds.

Emperor's producer Chris Longpre said revisiting the Dune franchise was a bit of a no-brainer for the company. The team had always entertained the idea that they would one day return to the desert planet of Arrakis, but has always wanted to do something different with a new Dune title. Hence the move to 3D, a first for the company. "We are also adding to the previous Dune games and to RTS games in general with the release of Emperor, by adding new levels of strategy and customisation. Our campaign map has been completely redesigned and is now non-linear, meaning that the player can actively choose which territory to attack as he goes along rather than progressing along a static campaign. The player will make strategic decisions along the way, based on available resources, political alliances, the strength of the



Sandworms...oh how we've missed them



enemy in surrounding territories, etc."

The story is set prior to the events and characters in the book. Longpre said that Westwood wasn't interested in re-telling Frank Herbert's story, but rather playing inside his richly detailed universe, and creating an entirely new story. And this is the stuff that all good RTS games are made of.

"I love all the factions," he gushed. "The noble Atreides fight with honour and precision. They combine a well-maintained arsenal of long-range weapons, with a loyal well-trained infantry core. The vile Harkonnen are tough thugs that enjoy death and destruction. Their rusty buckets of steel spit flame and poisons, while their infantry will walk through fire to kill an enemy. The secretive Ordos are masters of propaganda. They rely on technology to gain an edge on the battlefield with shields and hovercars, but disdain economic waste and build their vehicles light and fast. There is something for everyone."

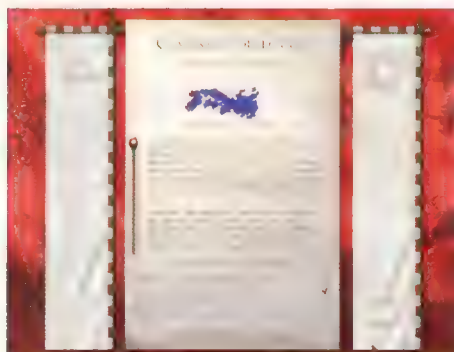
"There are over 150 missions in the game, which roughly equates to 50 missions per House," Longpre explained. "Since you control your path across the planet surface, you choose which missions are important to your overall campaign strategy, and fight the ones you think you can win. It's not necessary to play all the missions. In fact, each side could be won with a minimum of 13 missions. However, if you wish to gain the powerful alliance of one of the five sub-houses, you'll need to win side-missions to prove your commitment and win their loyalty."

But far from being Command and Conquer in the desert, the company seems to be emphasising the fact that this is a Dune game first and a Westwood title second. "I'm not sure it's ever easy to do justice to such an epic work as Frank Herbert's Dune whether it's through a movie, a TV mini-series or a game," Longpre told us, "but I will say we find the Dune universe to be an amazing setting for an RTS and we are staying true to the setting through our characters, environments and storylines."

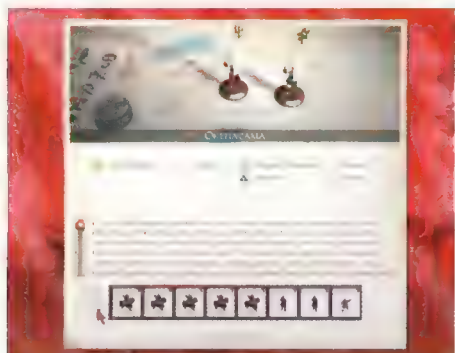


Shogun Total War - Warlords Edition

One of the best strategy games of last year looks like it's about to get better



■ Select your campaign....



■ ...and make sure you do your homework before making any rash decisions

Shogun: Total War was regarded by many as one of the best strategy games of last year. The large-scale gameplay combined with high production values and the enduring appeal of the 16th Century Japan setting resulted in an exciting package. Now comes the expansion pack, set to ship in two different forms, **The Mongol Invasion add-on and the Shogun Total War: Warlords Edition, which will include the original game.**

As we've come to expect from expansion packs, The Mongol Invasion boasts a number of new features, improvements, and refinements. The centrepiece is the single player strategic campaign that showcases the Mongol Invasion itself. As the player, you have the choice between controlling the invading Mongol and

certainly focuses attention on power projection rather than resource management.

As well as the Mongol Invasion campaign, there are three variations of the original Sengoku Jidai campaign from Shogun: Total War. These allow the campaign to be started from 1530, 1550, or 1580. The clans and provinces at your disposal are determined by the starting year, e.g. 1530 finds the majority of provinces in the hands of Rebel and Ronin forces. For all of the strategic campaigns, new victory conditions can be set, i.e. capture all provinces, capture 40 out of 60 provinces, eliminate rival clans, and

live for seventy years. This can significantly shorten the amount of time needed to complete a campaign.

In addition to the new strategic campaigns, four tactical campaigns are featured, each

comprising six battles with specific winning conditions, e.g. destroy the enemy whilst keeping half of your cavalry alive, kill the enemy Daimyo, or capture tactical points like castles.

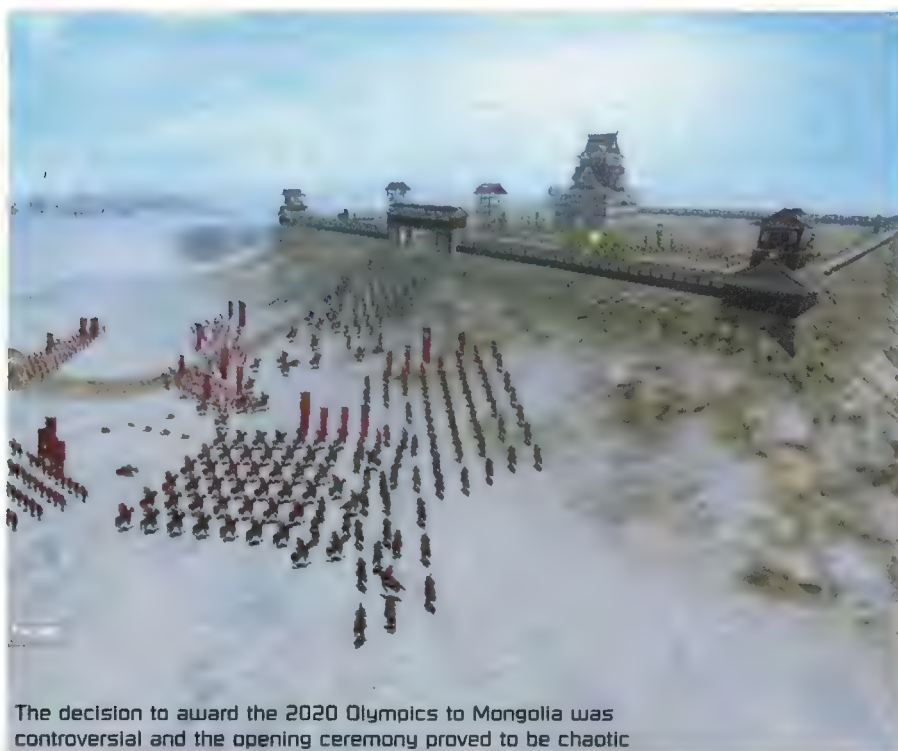
A welcome addition for many Shogun fans will be the ability to play multiplayer campaigns on the strategy map. Additionally, a Scenario Editor will allow players to define the strategy map start position and set up their own campaigns for single player or multiplayer games. A map editor allows players to modify the existing 111 maps or create completely new ones.

Warlords Edition comes with ten new battlefield units, four Japanese, three Mongol,

"It's already clear that this expansion is going to be a must-have"

Korean hordes or assuming the role of the defending Japanese forces, represented by the dominant clan of the period, the Hojo.

There are some significant differences when playing as the invading Mongols. The Mongol army starts with an invasion force and must take and hold territory. In return for this, reinforcements will be dispatched and arrive at coastal territories, seemingly selected at random. Unlike the defending Japanese, no armies can be raised, trained, or upgraded and you have no direct control over the forces that will be assigned to you as reinforcements. This takes a little bit of getting used to at first and



The decision to award the 2020 Olympics to Mongolia was controversial and the opening ceremony proved to be chaotic



■ Customise your army to suit your needs



and three Korean. The most notable of these include the Kensai (Sword Saints), a single swordsman unit, who although costly, can be devastating if used wisely. The Kensai can take on an entire enemy unit on his own. As the name suggests, Battlefield Ninjas are available in the tactical battle mode and have the ability to hide in relatively open terrain and launch a surprise attack. The Thunder Bomber provides an early grenadier that is most effective against tight enemy formations. The Mongol light cavalry are extremely versatile and effective, possessing a deadly combination of speed, accurate ranged archery fire, and close combat capability.

Besides the new features, Warlords Edition includes many gameplay and interface improvements. In strategic campaign mode, Emissaries can be used to bribe enemy leaders and Ninjas can be used to infiltrate enemy castles to break a siege. Diplomacy plays a more significant role, with greater opportunity for joint attacks and three-way battles. And it is now possible to control when and where reinforcements are deployed on the battlefield. Ports and traders ships are visible on the map and banners clearly indicate the rank of generals and Daimyo. There is also an option to destroy units that have become weakened.

Shogun: Warlords maintains the high standard production values seen in the original game. Movie clips are evocative, new information panels exhibit colourful artwork, and a rousing new soundtrack accompanies the Mongol campaign. A particularly nice touch is the way in which a rule from Sun Tzu's The Art of War is read during each transition from strategic mode to tactical mode. Even from this unfinished preview copy, it is clear that this expansion is going to be a must have for all Shogun: Total War fans. The combination of improvements and new features improve an already excellent game still further.





■ PUBLISHER: INFOGRADES ■ DEVELOPER: PARTICLE SYSTEMS ■ RELEASE: JUNE 2001

I-War 2: Edge of Chaos

An intergalactic debt-collector needs sorting out in this hotly anticipated sequel



■ The trick is to throw giant luminous hula-hoops onto the nose-cones of enemy ships

Welcome to the sequel to highly acclaimed starship sim, I-War. The intro explains that you have been tragically orphaned after your father was killed by an intergalactic debt collector. You're left with only an artificial intelligence called Clay for company and a thirst for revenge.

But the game itself isn't radically different from I-War 1. You again get to pilot a medium-sized starship, and fly around space blasting

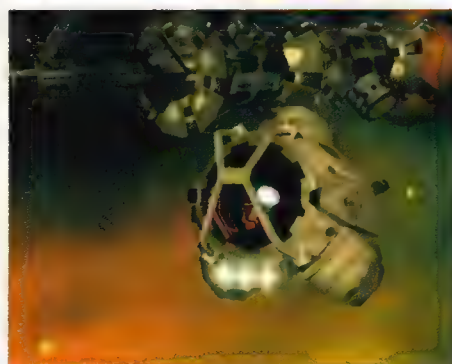
16 or so star systems taking on the in-game missions or indulging a bit of piracy. The structure is rather grandly described as a dynamic universe - though only the programmers know whether it truly is or not.

The universe-wandering single player game isn't quite as open as X - Beyond the Frontier in that you will eventually have to get back to the missions that drive the game's plot along - but there's plenty to do away from the main storyline.

While I-War wasn't exactly ugly as far as graphics go, I-War 2 looks pretty spectacular, especially during dogfights, with laser fire and projectiles lighting up space; although one does wonder if, in theory, lasers and

missiles would work properly in space. *[Leave the astrophysics to the experts, eh? - Ed.]* Naturally, 3D cards are supported and a fairly beefy PC is recommended to get the best out of the game though you can tweak graphics for lower spec machines.

Bunging all the elements together - its superb story and graphics, inertia physics, 'dynamic' universe and detailed ships systems - Independence War 2: Edge of Chaos definitely has the potential to be something pretty darned special. Unless they do something daft between now and the middle of June, Particle Systems and Infogrames are on to a winner.



■ I-War 2 looks pretty spectacular; fairly beefy PCs will get the best from it



■ I don't want to worry you Captain, but we're about to enter a world of hurt

"This game definitely has the potential to be something pretty darned special"

away at your foes. You also have to once again deal with the forces of inertia that, while sounding like some intergalactic villain, actually refers to the supposedly realistic physics in the game. Realistic, that is, in the sense that if you fire your engines in a certain direction you won't stop the moment you turn your engines off, you'll be carried along by your ship's momentum. This means that battles between ships tend to be a little tricky as you try to swoop around your foe to get the best firing position without either crashing into them or overshooting.

Edge of Chaos isn't just about dogfighting. Unlike the previous game, which was largely mission-based, Chaos allows you to fly around



■ PUBLISHER: PAN INTERACTIVE ■ DEVELOPER: GIZMO GAMES ■ RELEASE: JUNE 22

Star Trek - Dominion Wars

Ready to get beamed up? Yet another Star Trek title is hitting PCs



■ There are over 20 ships in all, some of them designed exclusively for the game

At first glance, *Dominion Wars* is a little similar to Interplay's Star Trek game, *Starfleet Command 2*. But while both place you in charge of a fleet of Star Trek ships, *Dominion Wars* lets you control a total of six different vessels, over *SFC2*'s three.

The action takes place during the height of the Dominion conflicts, as covered in the Deep Space Nine series, and follows a set mission-based structure. Though there are four factions involved in the conflict, there are only two

captain for each one. There are over 20 ships in total, some created exclusively for the game. Bigger ships require more credits to buy and also require higher-ranking, more expensive captains. Credits can also be spent on items such as stronger phasers, transporters that can bypass shields, computer viruses that can take control of ships, upgraded shields and so on.

Once in battle, the two-dimensional playing field and control interface are a little bit cluttered but once you get used to it, fairly easy

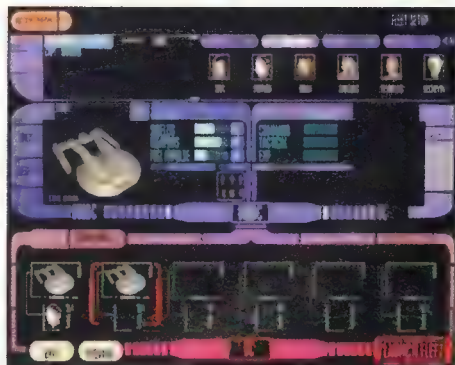
to use. As for the ships themselves, they handle much as you'd expect, and thankfully not all like fighters. Smaller ships do move and turn faster though, so bigger is not necessarily better. Ship combat can be quite a

drawn-out affair as the enemy ships circle each other at your command, firing until they've taken out each other's shields and can get down to some serious damage dealing.

The pre-beta of *Star Trek Deep Space Nine: Dominion Wars* has been entertaining to play and promises to be worth checking out when it arrives. That is, of course, unless you're not sick of the huge number of Star Trek games out already, comparable only to the huge exploitation of the Star Wars games. But even so, there are enough fans about to make sure *Dominion Wars* shifts a fair few copies.



■ Smaller ships in the game move and turn faster than their larger counterparts



■ Launching a fleet couldn't be easier: choose your ships and a captain for each

"Dominion Wars will be worth checking out, unless you're sick of Star Trek!"

sides. You can play the game as the anti-Dominion forces, in which case you get to pick ships from the Federation or Klingon armadas mixing and matching as you please; or on the Dominion's side, taking command of a mix of Cardassian and Jem Hadar forces.

Before you actually get involved in some serious ship-to-ship combat you have to decide on the ships themselves. You get a set number of credits to spend on ships and captains. Since each ship comes with phasers, transporters, shields and the like, all you need to do to actually be able to launch your fleet is to choose the ships you want in your fleet and a

Operation Flashpoint

War! Huh! What is it good for? Well, this is pretty good for starters...



Cricket practice always went off with a bang



■ Finding a place to park on a Saturday was getting more and more difficult

Is there any genre in PC gaming less innovative than the first-person shooter? Relying as they do on a very simple formula - looking through the eyes of your game-world alter ego, run around and shoot things - and with control systems evolved to near-perfection, every new FPS needs a new gimmick to be noticed. Operation Flashpoint has several - its uncompromising realism, its range of drivable vehicles, and its 80s cold war theme to name but three.

The action is set on a chain of islands that, although not specifically placed at any geographical location, bear a marked resemblance to rural France. Normally occupied by friendly US troops, the pastoral tranquillity of the region is spoiled when an army of renegade

convincing backdrop for the action.

Equally convincing is the weaponry modelling. Bohemia, the game's developers, have all served in the Czech army, and brought their real-life experiences of 80s warfare to the game. As in Counter-Strike, firing while running is inaccurate to the extent where you might as well save your ammo and resort to bad language. Reloading takes time, and careful aim is the key to success. Most conflicts take place in expansive outdoor areas, so there's always plenty of space for the enemy to utilise. Leading a moving target with a sniper rifle is crucial - sniping is much more of a skill here than in other games.

The vehicles, too, have an air of authenticity about them. The game includes a number - from jeeps and trucks to various tanks, anti-aircraft vehicles and even helicopters. They can be crewed by more than one man - often you'll be transporting your squad in the back of a truck, or riding a jeep with three others. You can even command your own tank, and

"If you are annoyed easily, or are looking for a traditional FPS, walk away"

Russians attempts an invasion.

In the campaign game, you are cast as a grunt in a squad of Marines. Though you start the game having to follow orders closely and do as you're told, as you gain in experience you gain in responsibility, and eventually you'll have your own squad to command. As the plot advances, the game keeps in close touch with the political (and technological) realities of the 80s - no microwave guns to be found here, and at one point a squadmate asks, "Are they going to nuke us, sir?" Thankfully the answer is no - there wouldn't be much of a game otherwise, but the nuclear undertones make an effective and

issue orders to a gunner and driver.

Flashpoint's troops move and act extremely convincingly. They will scatter and flee under fire, advance intelligently to avoid exposing themselves to incoming fire, and seek cover to lie low when appropriate. Commands can be issued to friendly squad members with a hierarchical menu system.

Once you're accustomed to Flashpoint's muted colours and flat vegetation, the effectiveness and realism of the graphics is fine, if slightly bland at times. The movement and animation of the soldiers is generally good, though it could benefit from work in some areas - when

boarding a truck, for instance, they just climb upwards and disappear. On the whole, though, Flashpoint is visually excellent, and the scale of the terrain is very impressive.

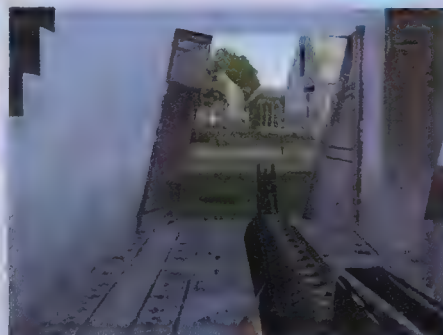
It also features a set of ten instant-action type single missions, and an extensive set of team-based and individual multiplayer modes. Multiplayer in particular is great fun - mostly thanks to the way Flashpoint encourages players to cooperate to drive vehicles and achieve objectives. The game also ships with a fully-featured and straightforward mission editor, so expect to see plenty of fan-created content hitting the web after release.

At times, patrol missions can be drawn-out and dull (much like the real thing, we suspect), so thankfully a time-acceleration feature is included. It's not a perfect solution, however - careless use can lead to you being sniped before spotting the enemy. But most will forgive the occasional lengthy, empty missions in the name of realism.

Some won't forgive, however, the way one bullet can kill, and put you back to the start of your mission, often with no warning. This situation can be avoided with experience and tactical awareness, and itself is another example of Flashpoint's high realism level, but it will not suit all tastes.

So if you're the type who annoys easily, or is looking for a more traditional FPS fix, walk away. If, though, the prospect of mastering these potential drawbacks interests you, you'll get a tremendous amount of pleasure from Flashpoint. Its level of realism, convincing detail and great multiplayer make it one of the best military FPS games on the market.

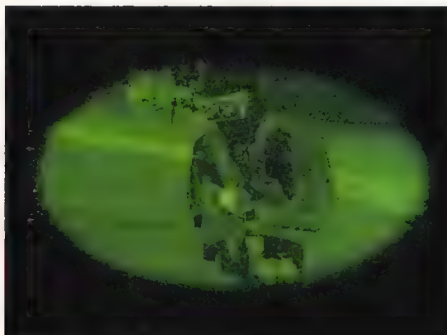
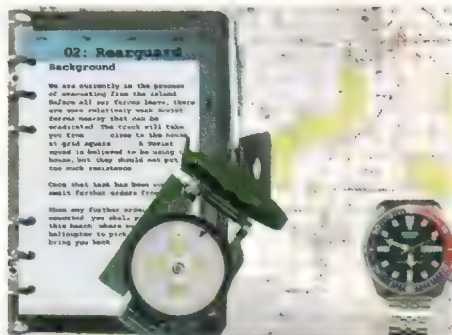
Flashpoint's environments



Action takes place indoors and outside; the scale of the battle areas is impressive



The action can be full-on but this isn't your traditional FPS: patience is essential



■ 'Get in that tank and ready to whup some ass, soldier!'

■ Beware the snipers - one shot can kill

JUDGEMENT

MIN: P350, 64MB RAM
GDS SUGGESTS: PIII-500, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS
■ DEVELOPER: BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE
■ RELEASE: JUNE 22

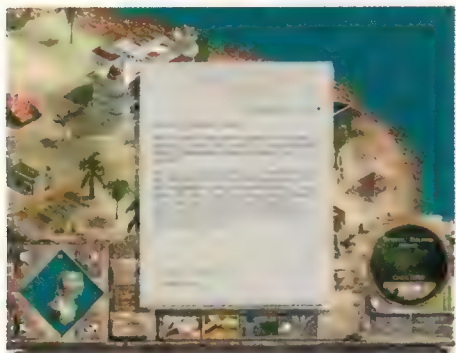
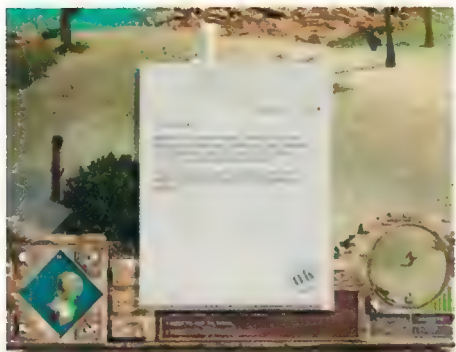
GAMES DOMAIN: Demos ☒ Movies ☒ Themes ☐
ONLINE: Patches ☐ Cheats ☐ Walkthrus ☐

- + Detailed and convincing
- + Excellent graphics
- + Plot complements action well
- + Enjoyable multiplayer
- One-shot kills will infuriate some
- Some animation glitches

WORDS: MIKE SMITH

Tropico

Ever wanted to run your own banana republic? Dictator or democrat, here's your chance



Famed for its railway management simulation *Railroad Tycoon 2*, Poptop Software has turned its attention to a rather different style of game. Though players of Poptop's recent titles will recognise much of the look of *Tropico*, the theme is both different and novel.

It's a simple enough formula - run a small Caribbean island, provide jobs and housing for the people, and (hopefully) develop it, over time, into a successful nation. How you achieve this is up to you - dictator or democrat, communist or capitalist, violent or peaceful, there are many paths open to *Tropico* players.

When starting the random island game, you choose from a set of characteristics for your ruler. Each has various positive and negative

different structures, each with its own range of options and settings to modify its effect. There's also a set of edicts that can be issued - these fall broadly into individual, monetary, diplomatic and social categories, and cover litter prohibition, tax cuts, imprisoning dissidents and organising a visit from the Pope.

Your people will periodically call for elections - whether you listen to them is up to you, but not holding elections will make them more likely to turn on you and kick you out of office. If you proceed with them, there's a further option to rig the ballot, but your smarter subjects will work this out, causing further unrest. Lose the election, and it's adios to you, Señor.

Probably the best way to sum up *Tropico* is to imagine *Sim City* with a much more complex

economy model. The island-building aspects of the game bear a strong resemblance to city management games (placing them carefully is vital for efficiency), but the focus of the game is different. It's not enough to build

a school, then sit back and watch students flood in; to encourage education, you'll need to create an incentive for people to study rather than work. Many jobs around the island - policemen, factory workers, soldiers, sportsmen - require a high school education, so setting high wages for qualified people is one way. The people won't bother to attend if there are no such jobs available, though, so balancing the number of teachers (to minimise costs) with the requirement for more educated workers can be tricky. *Tropico* is filled with neat little interdependent situations such as this, and it's rare that changing one factor in one place won't

"Budding Fidel Castros will snap up this fun and absorbing title"

effects. For instance, a background of "Booze Baron" will ensure high prices from rum sales; a trait of "Flatulent" will harm foreign relations, and mean palace guards must be paid double.

To keep your citizens happy (and thus, yourself in power) services need to be built. These range from police and army outposts to keep the peace, to clinics and hospitals, to churches and cathedrals, and include a wide selection of entertainment facilities like pubs, restaurants and strip clubs. (Well, OK, it calls them "cabarets," but from the look of the women who work there, there's only one sort of "cabaret" going on.) All in all, there are around 85

■ Your military need to be paid well, otherwise they'll start a coup



have knock-on effects in other aspects of your economy.

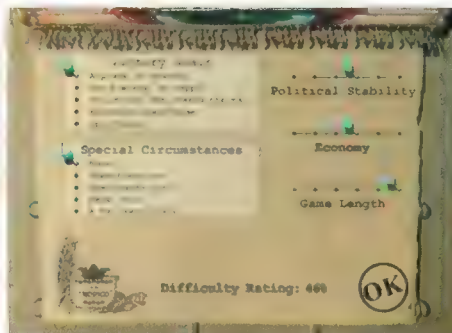
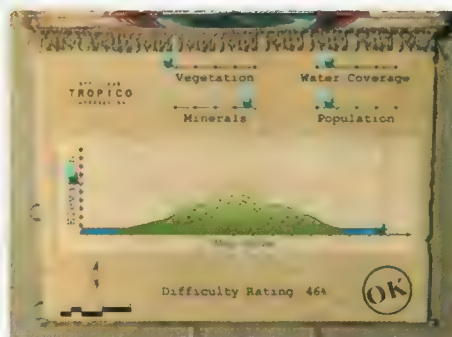
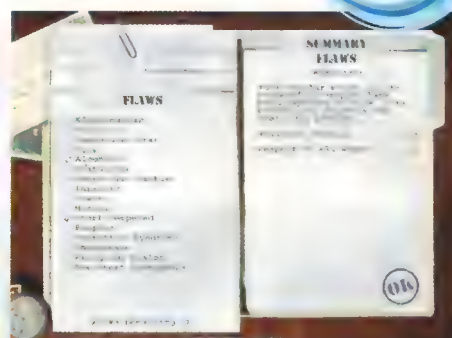
Tropico just oozes Caribbean atmosphere. It's clear the artists have had tremendous fun working on the graphics - from the tall, imposing power station to the grand façade of the luxury hotels, each building is individual and attractive. The effort extends to the animations for each individual Tropicant - they change clothes as they change occupations, so it's instantly possible to see the jobs of each wandering individual. The fat bankers swagger around with smart blue suits, the military have a suitably assured and confident gait and the bishops shuffle about as if they'll soon be meeting God themselves. You can delve into each individual's needs, personality, family background and even see what they're thinking, rather reminiscent of The Sims.

The sound and music matches the graphical effort excellently. Though the music can get slightly wearing after extended play, its South American vibe is cheerful and pleasant in smaller quantities.

The only major question mark hanging over Tropico is one of lasting appeal: once you've seen it all, Tropico can become repetitive. More varied preset scenarios would have helped - there are a few, but they are somewhat uninspired and lacking in variety.

There are some other, more minor gripes with the interface and economic system. Presumably to avoid dealing with the problems of inflation, the designers have capped all rents, salaries and prices. This can occasionally create difficulties when your armed forces are unhappy and at max pay - it would be handy to be able to up their wages a little to placate them for a while. Some of the edicts are rather ineffectual, and there could be more depth to the election system.

Tropico is an amusing, individual, absorbing and fun game. Budding Fidels will snap it up, and those bored with traditional management games of this type will find it deliciously different. Just don't expect to still be playing it when the sequel is released.



■ The landscape and rules can be customised to your liking

JUDGEMENT

MIN: P200, 32MB RAM

GDD SUGGESTS:
PII-233, 64MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: GDD
■ DEVELOPER: POPTOP
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

GAMES DOMAIN Demos ☐ Movies ☒ Themes ☐
ONLINE: Patches ☐ Cheats ☐ Walkthrus ☐

+ Stylish presentation

+ Great sense of humour that makes it a joy to play

+ Deep economic model

+ Atmospheric

+ Lots to see...

- ...but when you've seen it all that's it

- Wage caps

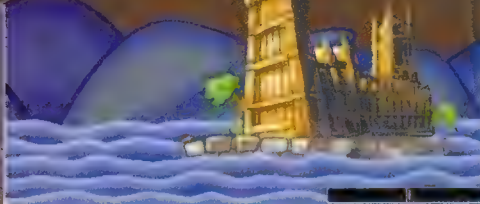
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WORDS: MIKE SMITH

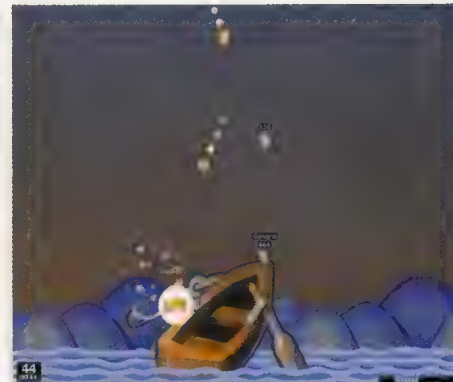


Worms World Party

Those worms are back again and ready for a bit of a global knees-up



An arsenal of weaponry is at your worms' disposal, alongside useful gadgets like the bungee rope, pictured in action above



The new economy class channel crossing didn't get off to a good start



Works of art include The Mona Worma, The Hayworm and Wormhol's soup cans

Fans of the Worms series are no doubt jumping for joy at the prospect of a brand new episode to entertain them. With support for Internet and LAN play, new cooperative missions and multiplayer game modes, plus the usual collection of training features, single-player and skirmish missions, is this the ultimate Worms game?

The principle behind Worms World Party is to bring Worms gamers from around the world together to indulge in their favourite pastime. If

entertain and destroy; the machine gun, blowtorch and bomb just get the job done. There is a mixture of frustration when you miss by a mile, and joy when you get a shot bang on. But generally being hit and hitting is a pleasure. WWP is a game that doesn't take itself seriously and you should treat it the same way.

Once you have got to grips with the basic gameplay, you can delve into the features that allow for customisation. There are too many to list here, but you can design your own team and levels, change the game rules, adjust weapons and tweak just about everything in the game to suit you. Team customisation is essential in WWP's multiplayer games to add a little spice to the proceedings.

But while Worms is certainly a fantastic game, it does have a few problems - mainly relating to time. Worms has been around forever and not much has changed in the gameplay. Sure, you can tweak and twist, but you could do that in Worms Armageddon; yeah, you can play online, but you could do that since Worms 2; and it's got these great weapons, but so did even the original Worms. So it's only recommended for those who have never played a game of Worms before. If you've played one of the previous Worms games, and weren't all that interested, there is no point parting with cash for this.

"You control a squad of worms. Yes, those wiggly things you ate as a child"

you've never played, or heard, of the Worms series, then the concept is very simple - Worms is a 2D, turn-based game where you control a squad of worms (yes, the little pink things you ate as a child), which unleash an arsenal of powerful and crazy weapons on each other until one team remains standing, or wriggling, victorious.

The trick to playing the game when you are new is to familiarise yourself with the various weapons and their particular uses - there is a good list in the manual but actual hands-on experience is preferable. Weapons such as the skunk, super banana bomb and super sheep will

JUDGEMENT

MIN: P100, 32MB RAM

GDSUGGESTS:
P200, 64MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: VIRGIN
■ DEVELOPER: TEAM 17
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

GAMES Domain ☐ Demos ☐ Movies ☒ Themes ☒
ONLINE: Patches ☐ Cheats ☒ Walkthrus ☒

- + It's Worms
- + Easy to learn and lots of fun
- + Low system specs
- + Fairly cheap
- It's the same as the others
- Weapon use can frustrate

X-Com Enforcer

Grab a gun and prepare to get trigger-happy



Although textures aren't that detailed, they are helped along by the fast-paced action

Before the blockbuster movie *Men in Black*, there was the X-COM franchise. It began in the mid-nineties with *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, spawned a couple of sequels, and a spin-off into the space combat sim genre (*X-COM Interceptor*).

But now the "eXtraterrestrial COMbat unit" lives on in a new variant on the theme in the form of a 3rd-person 3D action game. This obviously won't win the hearts of the diehard X-COM fans or hardcore turn-based strategy crowd,

"It's uninspired, but if you want all-out action with no cerebral challenge it's here"

but judging the game on its own merits as a competing action title, how does it measure up?

The upside is that the game is extremely action-packed, and like *Serious Sam*, there's often many tens of monsters coming at you at any one time. The most entertaining moments for me were certainly when the screen was crammed full of many variations of aliens, all vying for my, er, blood/oil. The weapons are great fun, and very capable of clearing crowded areas.

On a visual level, *Enforcer* is a decent cut above average. It utilises the ever popular Unreal Tournament engine; the look of both the

in-game graphics and interface will be instantly recognisable. Textures aren't particularly detailed, but the action in the game is so fast they look good enough for what you see. The style itself is very colourful and almost cartoony, and the weapons effects are particularly enjoyable especially when there's so much mayhem happening.

There's no doubt that *X-COM Enforcer* is a seriously retro-minded and generally uninspired project - what modern PC game, for example, has civilians represented as unanimated, static figures glued to the ground or doesn't allow the player to switch weapons on command? It's actually reminiscent of the coin-op classic *Gauntlet* in the way that it just

puts you into a level with randomly spawned creatures that keep coming until you destroy the generators (they're called "transporters" in this game for plot reasons... snicker). In fact, it would be a perfect game for an arcade - easy to pick up, zero depth and repetitive gameplay that's just fun enough to keep you playing to the next round. For casual gamers, there are certainly worse things you could spend time on to relax during lunch breaks.

Enforcer's not outrageously priced for what it offers, although it's tough to recommend over something like *Serious Sam*, which is first-person, and much more imaginative.



■ 'Sorry. It must have been that Scotch egg I had for lunch. It's not broken down yet'



■ The weapons are great fun and more than capable of clearing a room

MIN: P233, 32MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS:
PIII-500, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: INFOGAMES
■ DEVELOPER: MICROPROSE
■ RELEASE: TBC

GAMES DOMAIN ONLINE: Demos ☐ Patches ☐ Movies ☐ Cheats ☐ Themes ☒ Walkthrus ☐

+ Plenty of action and fun weapons

+ Tons of monsters on screen at once

+ Colourful and stylish graphics

- Very shallow and uninspired

- Can be dull

Original War

It's an original take on the RTS genre and it's about war. Let's call it Original War then!



Futuristic cyber-wars where you build a base, upgrade structures, and push out as many troops and tanks as possible before annihilating the enemy are ten-a-penny in the world of real-time strategy games, yet very few do it with originality. Until now, that is. In a freakishly appropriate title-naming session down at Altar Interactive, Original War was born - a highly original futuristic RTS that combines some innovative ideas with a few RPG elements.

The story is definitely different. Set in darkest Siberia, the plot revolves around a struggle between the Russians and the Americans for possession of a time travelling machine. We won't go into too much detail, but there are some Arab terrorists and ancient Ape-men thrown in for good measure. As we all know, storylines in games are usually only there to justify the action, but it's to the developer's credit that it has chosen to make the game non-linear, and the tasks you are given depend on the choices you make throughout the previous mission.

Unlike just about every other RTS in existence, you can't actually build troops. Instead, you have to make do with what you are given, hence your troops are not disposable. To counter this, each troop can be trained in one of four disciplines: soldiering, mechanics, engineering and science. As they perform tasks in their particular area, they gain experience and eventually increase their skills. You are also given points to distribute amongst your team at the end of each mission, and can adapt their skills to your playing style. It can become a tad

annoying when the enemy attacks and you have to send everybody running to the armoury to change their skill-set to 'Soldier' but, in a way, it's kind of realistic as you imagine everyone running there to grab their weapon and ammo.

One issue we do have with this, however, is that the 'Mechanic' skill seems to be far more important than the others. Tanks, as you would expect, are hideously powerful and of course in OW they don't come with a driver. This means just about everyone has to have their mechanic skill as highly developed as possible in order to take advantage of this. The vehicles themselves, however, are pretty neat in that they're totally customisable. You can choose a different chassis, the main weapon, the vehicle's mode of motion and its power source. It makes for a

"The scripting is awful and the voice acting is hammier than Elvis's fridge"

nicely varied set up and is bound to delight micro-managing custom freaks everywhere.

The graphics are pretty, er, pretty and seem to automatically adjust themselves to your PC's specification. Good news if you don't have a clue what you're doing. Those with half a clue might appreciate at least a little manual control, however. The scenery is very well drawn, as are most of the units and structures, and it's particularly good that the scenery works. Crawling around makes your troops less visible, as do trees and various other assorted shrubberies. It is great to see the game actually delivering what so many others only promised.

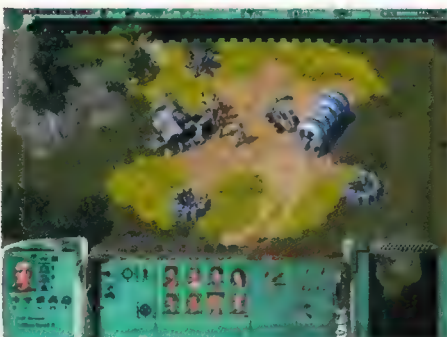




The animations are a bit of a let down, though and the AI is also somewhat dodgy. It functions well enough, and includes some neat tricks such as having units automatically pitch in when someone's building a nearby structure, but the troops seem to have a horrible range of awareness. One of their best buddies could be getting blown to pieces by an entire regiment of bad guys about two feet away and they wouldn't bat an eyelid. And yet when they do get in range, they have a nasty habit of diving straight into the thick of it unless you tell each and every one of them exactly where to position themselves. What exacerbates this is the fact that buildings tend to explode shortly after being badly damaged, and yet no one seems to mind standing right next to them just before they do.

But these are minor problems compared to the downright awful scripting and voice acting, which is hamnier than Elvis's fridge. The characters aren't just two-dimensional, they're walking, talking clichés. Now one might argue this merely calls for knocking a little off the final score, and in some games, you'd be right. However, it's more disastrous for *Original War* because the game has a deliberate focus on the characters. It's not like *Tiberian Sun* where you can churn out an endless amount of anonymous squaddies and carelessly send them to their doom. You have to take great care of every single character - there's even an option for them to pull out of combat after being severely injured so a doctor can treat them. Problem is, of course, that it's very hard to care for any of the characters when they've got about as much depth as a blow-up paddling pool and as much charisma and individuality as a Digestive.

If you can get past the aggravating acting and script and other minor flaws, then you're in for a treat. It really is an original title and despite its problems it is far from one to overlook altogether. But it is probably worth taking the time to check out the demo before you cough up for this.



■ The scenery is very well drawn, as are most of the units and structures



MIN: TBC

GDD SUGGESTS:
PII-400, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
■ DEVELOPER: ALTAR INTERACTIVE
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

GAMES
DOMAIN
ONLINE: Demos ☒ Movies ☐ Themes ☐
Patches ☐ Cheats ☐ Walkthrus ☐

- + Originality
- + RPG elements work
- + Proper use of cover
- + Non-linear mission structure
- Awful scripts
- Diabolical voice acting
- Very short AI range

WORDS: JAMES KAY

Gladiac 920

It looks impressive, but will you be glad you bought it?

Over the last six months or so, it's seemed that advances in graphics hardware have been more about providing stellar frame-rates in Quake III than actually advancing game graphics. Even though we've seen Nvidia's Geforce range go through a few product iterations, in real terms there have been few additions to its feature set - it's been more of the same, only faster.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. Make faster 3D cards, and the world will make better, more fully-featured and more advanced graphic engines to run on them, right? Well, there are limits. Even with the hardware T&L engines in recent cards, many complex effects have needed some CPU power to process, because there's no way for card manufacturers to provide hardware solutions for every engine requirement. CPU time is a critical commodity - as the graphics engine takes more, there is less for other game functions - artificial intelligence, physics and sound to name a few.

So Nvidia's latest offering, the new Geforce3, has excited many developers - not least John

high resolution, though, making anti-aliasing somewhat unnecessary. At lower resolutions, the image quality difference was decidedly noticeable, and because the card's speed is limited by the CPU in these less challenging situations we found antialiasing can be implemented with little to no performance loss.

The Gladiac 920 also comes with a TV-out connection and a handy suite of software, including a

Geforce3-enhanced version of Giants: Citizen Kabuto and a software DVD player.

The effects made possible with the chip's new features will take time to become commonly implemented in new games. From some of the Geforce3-enabled demos currently available (3dMark2001 and Vulpine GLMark, for example) the future looks promising. The screenshots demonstrate a certain amount of the potential, but without seeing the effects in motion it's hard to get a clear idea. How many games will take advantage of these effects also remains to be seen; plenty of developers seem to be excited by the idea, but considering the time hardware T&L took to be common in games, it could be a while before the potential is properly realised.

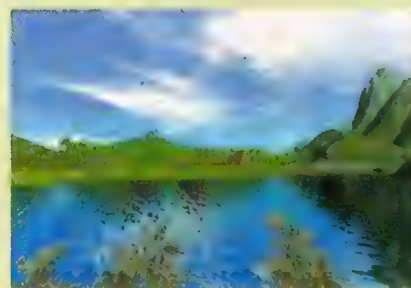
"It's lightening fast and about as future-proof as a graphics card ever gets"

Carmack of Id fame, who demonstrated Doom 3 recently using the new technology. Thanks to its highly-configurable architecture it's simple to produce complex special effects with little or no CPU overhead. The first card based on the new chip to hit the streets is Elsa's 64 Mb Gladiac 920 - we took a close look at its new features and its performance.

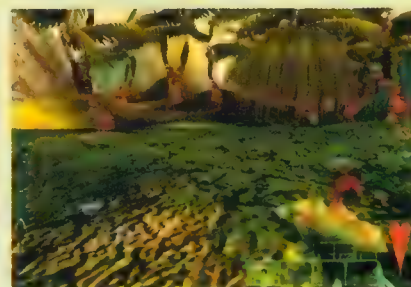
At lower resolutions, the Elsa card actually posted comparable speeds to the Geforce2 Ultra card we tested a few months ago. At higher resolutions it becomes clear the new memory controller does a great job of making the most of the chip's fillrates, as it shows the competition a clean pair of heels, making it convincingly the fastest card currently available.

In our Quake III tests we found the new quincunx mode does impact performance more seriously than 2x, and fell about midway between the 2x and 4x values. The test is at a

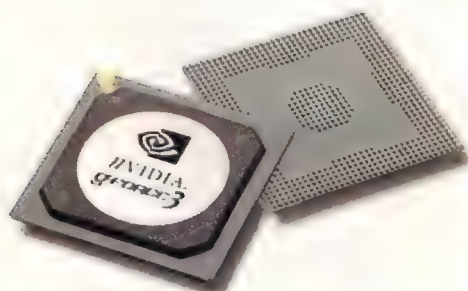
So how does the Geforce3 measure up?



The difference is plain to see: on the left, a screenshot using a Geforce 2MX; on the right, the visual glory produced by a Geforce3



These two screenshots are taken from a Geforce3-enhanced version of Giants, included in the Gladiac 920 package



Geforce3 features - the gory details

■ Vertex Shader

The vertex shader is a fully programmable effects unit that operates on vertices - points in 3D space usually used as the corners of 3D objects. By altering the position of these vertices, any number of dynamic effects can be achieved. Characters can be made to appear to breathe, water waves can be modelled, and clothing and skin can wrinkle and deform realistically - "procedural deformation" effects. By changing the fog value at a point based on its position, complex fog or smoke effects can be generated. Optical effects like lens distortion, refraction and heat waves can be made. The unit is reconfigurable, so different effects can be applied to different objects within a scene. Best of all, all this eye candy comes at little or no CPU overhead, and the instruction set is straightforward, consisting mostly of vector mathematics operations.

■ Pixel Shader

The pixel shader does for textures what the vertex shader does for...well, vertices. It adds a flexible, programmable engine for developers to create pixel-shading effects. It also allows textures to be dependent on other textures, which opens the way for (amongst other things) reflective bump mapping, which was not previously possible without running completely in software. It also opens the way for individual, custom-written shading routines, enabling a variety of interesting effects, not least the trendy "Jet Set Radio", cel-shaded look.

■ Memory bandwidth conservation

3D graphics need a lot of memory bandwidth. Good, fast memory is extremely expensive, so good, fast 3D cards are expensive to build. Nvidia's answer to this problem is to redesign the memory controller on the Geforce to include a number of bandwidth-conservation measures.

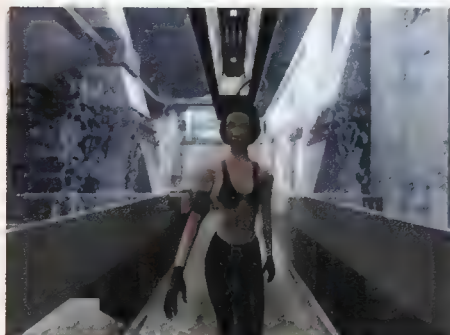
■ Antialiasing

Antialiasing, a technique for reducing the unsightly "jaggies", or stair-step effect around diagonal lines on screen, has been implemented on Nvidia cards in the past. But there's always been a significant performance loss when using it. The Geforce3 has a neat new technique for improving quality while cutting the frame-rate penalty, making it probably the first time the technique has been something you'd consider leaving on permanently. The hardware can also be used for depth-of-field effects, where only one part of a scene is in clear focus while points closer and further are blurred; a favourite tool of photographers.

Games currently in development which include support for the more advanced features of the Geforce3 include an underwater shoot 'em up being published by Fishtank, Aquanox; cyberspace action game Dronez; and Id's eagerly-awaited Doom 3. As the Xbox uses a derivative of the Geforce3 as its graphics processor (paired with a 733MHz PIII) the number of titles with similar enhancements should grow rapidly, especially if developing PC and Xbox games side-by-side becomes common.

So is the hefty price of the Geforce3 worth it?

The introduction of this new, top-of-the-range product will probably cause Geforce2 cards to drop in price - but unless this reduction is huge it's probably wise to pay the extra for the huge range of additional features the card provides. Even if the new hardware doesn't find favour with developers, it's still lightning fast and about as future-proof as a graphics card ever gets. The Gladiac 920 is a hefty investment at an RRP of £360 (though if you shop around you should find it below £300), but a worthwhile one.



■ Cyberspace action game, Dronez, will use a custom-written shader routine



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8

WORDS: MIKE SMITH

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STREET FIGHTER

ALPHA

THE MOVIE

Following the successful line of UK Streetfighter products - including the Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Nintendo Game Boy SF 'Alpha' video games and Manga's hugely successful Street Fighter II The Animated Movie - Street Fighter 'Alpha' smashed into video stores on DVD and VHS in April.

Running at just over 100 minutes (and with an additional hour of extras on the DVD), this 15 certificated film by Manga Entertainment, in association with Capcom Co. Ltd, was an instant hit not just with Manga fans, but with console gamers too (especially owners of the new PlayStation 2 machine with its DVD capabilities).

Now Games Domain Offline is giving you the chance to win a copy of a movie that is, quite literally, hard-hitting. We have five copies on VHS and five on DVD. All you have to do to win is answer the following question, phone our hotline number below and follow the instructions on the line. Remember to speak clearly and state whether you would like to have a copy of the film on DVD or VHS. Because the film is a 15-certificate, you **must** state your age when recording your entry. Entries without a suitable age will be disqualified. Good luck!

The question is:

Two of the main Streetfighter characters are called:

- a) Bill and Ben
- b) Ryu and Ken
- c) Adam and Eve



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Entry to this competition is by competition hotline only. Follow the instructions on the line and remember to speak clearly. Calls cost 50p per minute and should just take over a minute. Always ask the person who pays the phone bill for permission before making your call.

Happy 10th birthday Sonic!

Sonic Boom!

In the early 90s, faced with the marketing muscle of Nintendo and its incalculable plumber, Sega was in need of something, someone, that would give the company instant recognition the world over. It needed an icon that would be potent enough to sell. Megadrives of shop shelves and compete with Mario, who had been a household name for almost a decade.

With marketing money to spend, and next generation technology to push, Sega's Yuji Naka and his team created Sonic the Hedgehog, a spiky blue ball of fur with attitude - and from moment Nobody, Sega included, could have foreseen the effect Sonic the Hedgehog would have on the world. Sega had created exactly what it had hoped for: an icon that would establish the company at the forefront of the videogame revolution for years to come.

Sonic: hedgehogging the limelight

Sonic the Hedgehog - June 1991

1991 was a major event in Sega's history as it saw the spiky blue hedgehog make his debut on the then state-of-the-art 16-bit Megadrive. The game was groundbreaking at the time, featuring breathtaking visuals, lightning quick multi-parallax scrolling and more action than you could shake a stick at.

Slipping on the sneakers of Sonic himself, it was up to the player to foil the plans of evil megalomaniac Dr Robotnik who had turned the fluffy inhabitants of Emerald Coast into a bunch of savage robotic misfits.

Jumping and spinning his way through genius level designs, the original Sonic the Hedgehog ensured Sega accomplished exactly what it had set out to do. Not only had it achieved mass-market success and shifted thousands of Megadrive systems, it also left the public hungry for more.

Sonic the Hedgehog 2 - November 1992

24/11/92 was the date for the simultaneous worldwide release of the hugely anticipated sequel to Sonic the Hedgehog. Dubbed Sonic 2's Day (Sonic Tuesday, geddit?), the game's release saw the unexpected addition of a feisty fox called Tails, and expanded on the original in every way, shape and form imaginable.

Sonic the Hedgehog 3 - February 1994

After his outing in the arcades in 1993's SegaSonic, Sonic made a return to home systems in his third Megadrive outing. Featuring deeper puzzle elements, and more diverse gameplay, this incarnation was so involving that it was the first game in the series to have save-game slots built into the cartridge. This was also the title in which another Sonic sidekick, Knuckles, made his screen debut.

Sonic and Knuckles - October 1994



GamesDomain





Anniversary
10TH
SONIC
THE MOVIE

SEGA

Hot off the heels of Sonic Hedgehog 3, Sonic and Knuckles was a 'lock-on' title that extended the life of the three Megadrive Sonic prequels. When Sonic and Knuckles was slotted together with another of the series' cartridges, different possibilities were made available. For example, if the title was plugged into the sequel, Knuckles would be available as a playable character.

Sonic Jam - May 1997

The first of the Saturn's Sonic titles was basically a nostalgia trip for hardened hedgehog fans. Featuring a compilation of emulated Megadrive Sonic titles, the package also gifted players with access to the Sonic museum which paved the way to many Sonic goodies.

Although not exactly what Sonic fans had hoped for, Sonic Jam's 3D showcase acted as a prototype to a certain Dreamcast title.

Sonic Adventure - September 1999

After a long, long wait for a follow-up to Sonic and Knuckles, Sega decided to use its mascot as the 'killer-app' for their 128-bit Dreamcast console. With Sonic Adventure, Sega managed to take the goodness of the game's predecessors, and incorporate it into a fully-fledged 3D environment.

The future..?

With Sonic Adventure 2 arriving in the not-to-distant future, the spiky blue ball of fun will also be strutting his stuff on Nintendo's Game Boy Advance in Sonic Advance. The future looks very bright indeed for Sonic Team's creation.



The games:

June 1991	Sonic the Hedgehog (MD)
November 1992	Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (MD) and Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (MS)
June 1993	SegaSonic (ARC)
July 1993	Sonic CD (MCD)
November 1993	Sonic Chaos (GG) / Sonic Spinball (MD) and Sonic Drift (GG)
September 1993	Sonic Spinball (GG)
February 1994	Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (MD)
October 1994	Sonic and Knuckles (MD)
November 1994	Sonic Triple Trouble (GG)
March 1995	Sonic Drift 2 (GG)
June 1996	Sonic the Fighters (ARC)
November 1996	Sonic 3D Blast (SS & MD)
May 1997	Sonic Jam (SS)
November 1997	Sonic R (SS)
June 1998	Sonic Jam (GC)
September 1999	Sonic Adventure (DC)
December 1999	Sonic Pocket Adventure (NGPC)

Key:

MD - Megadrive
MS - Master System
ARC - Arcade
MCD - Mega CD
GG - Game Gear
SS - Sega Saturn
GC - Game.com
DC - Dreamcast
NGPC - NeoGeo Pocket Color



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E3 - The Electronic En

The games industry's showpiece event is E3 or the Electronic Entertainment Exposition to give it its full, less sexy, title. Held in exotic locations around the globe, it's *the place to be* if you are a developer, publisher or scruffy games journalist.

In its seventh year, the expo was held at the Los Angeles Convention Center (for the second year running) from May 17 to 19. The show's owner, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) has confirmed that more than 62,000 interactive entertainment professionals from more than 70 countries attended the event which is as famed for its parties as its major gaming announcements.

This year more than 400 exhibitors showcased thousands of computer and video games and next generation technologies, including more than 750 products seen for the first time ever at E3 2001.

As always, Games Domain spared no expense to despatch a crack team of reporters to cover the event from start to finish. So while the real work continued in the boiler room that is the GDO editorial department, our boys bravely fought off sunburn and endless hangovers to do 'a bit of work' in LA. Yes, they toiled in the free bars, grafted at the all-night parties and struggled on the sun-drenched beaches to deliver the goods to our army of readers. *[Can I detect a note of sarcasm? - Ed.]*

Ahem, anyway, apart from alcohol poisoning, our boys also managed to bring back a hatful of insider reports just for you. Enjoy.

E3 x-pects: MS underwhelms Mad Dash Racing



Microsoft chose E3 to end months of speculation about the US launch and price of its uber-console, Xbox.

Journalists were told the Xbox would retail at \$299 and up to 800,000 units would be available on November 8, the US launch date, alongside 15 to 20 different Xbox game titles.

Although we will have to wait until Spring 2002 before the Xbox materialises in UK stores, the details give a clear indication that Microsoft means business: few had expected such an aggressive price point for its high-powered next-gen console.

Microsoft anticipates between one and 1.5m units will be sold in the States over the Christmas period.

Demonstrations of a number of previously announced and new titles followed the revelations.

Westwood's Pirates of Skull Cove, an action-adventure with a female lead boasted an impressive draw distance whereby whole islands could be viewed at once, with no fogging or drop in frame-rate.

Dead or Alive 3 was perhaps the most graphically advanced demo. Numerous impressive special effects were demonstrated, in environments ranging from a sandy beach, complete with foamy waves and a sunset, to an autumnal forest filled with windblown fallen leaves.

Also announced were a number of exclusive Xbox franchises. Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon, Shrek and Steven Spielberg's new movie A.I. will all be heading to Xbox. Capcom games were briefly premiered, including Genma Onimusha, Dino Crisis 3, and Brain-Box (working title), a robot simulation game.

Peter Moore, President of Sega of America, also announced two new Xbox Sega titles: Crazy Taxi Next and House of the Dead 3.

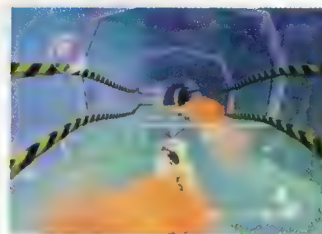
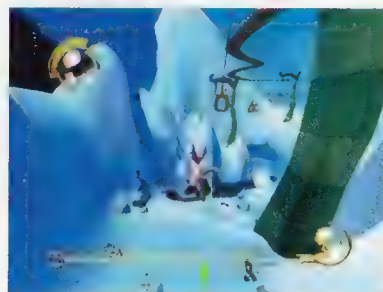
Microsoft also stressed it was keen to focus on online play. "We're moving online gaming from a novelty to a necessity," said Robbie Bach, Microsoft's Xbox chief. "Online play has to be fast and easy," he continued, and went on to detail his expectations that more games will be delivered in an episodic, downloadable format. He also unveiled the Xbox Communicator, a headset and microphone intended to make voice communications the norm with Xbox games.

Eidos and Crystal Dynamics' new Xbox racer was one of the many titles playable on the floor.

A character-based, cartoony combat racer, it features nine characters and a number of huge tracks. Each level contains around 700,000 polygons - for comparison, this is the same number as used in the entirety of one of Crystal Dynamics' previous Gex titles.

Each character is able to use one of three "special racing abilities", Dash, Bash and Glide. These can give access to secret areas or extra power-ups and shortcuts.

Though the game moved well and looked good, it's bound to suffer from comparisons with Pen Pen Triceleron, a disappointing Dreamcast combat racer in a similar vein.



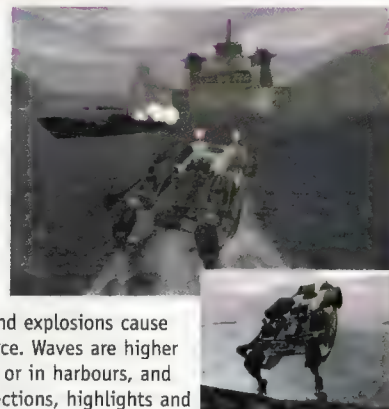
Blood Wake

Developed by Stormfront Studios, Blood Wake is a boat combat game, which uses the Xbox graphical hardware to produce extremely realistic water effects.

Ten powerful gunboats, plenty of weapons, 25 plot-based single player missions and smart artificial intelligence promise to make it fun to play.

As the boats skim over the water, they trail realistic wakes, and explosions cause waves to spread out from the source. Waves are higher out at sea than towards the coast or in harbours, and the sea is bump-mapped, has reflections, highlights and is transparent. Oh, and the explosions are unnecessarily big.

Single-player missions have diverse objectives such as defending or escorting other boats, attacking ground bases and reconnaissance, and will take place in a variety of conditions - day and night, fog, typhoons and storms to name a few.



Entertainment Exposition

Soldier Of Fortune 2 Neverwinter Nights Wolfenstein

Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix [top] and Return to Castle Wolfenstein [bottom] were being displayed within feet of each other on the Activision stand.

Both based on the Quake 3 engine and looking great, they drew huge crowds, probably helped by the Wolfenstein leather-clad lovelies adorning the area.

Soldier of Fortune II, in development at Raven, has made some huge graphical advances over the original, Quake 2-engined game. Though the developers were under orders not to showcase the more gory aspects of the game in such a public environment, the area-sensitive damage system has been extended, and now has per-pixel accurate collision detection. It features a closer emphasis on real-world weaponry and tactics, and for the first time your character, John Mullins, will be fighting as part of a team.

A Raven representative confirmed the game won't ship with multiplayer, sadly - the team wants to focus on providing a satisfactory single-player experience. Perhaps a patch will be available post-release to add in multiplayer content, like Deus Ex, but no information on this is currently available. Soldier of Fortune II is due this winter.

Return to Castle Wolfenstein is looking strong, if somewhat more formulaic than SoF. Developer Gray Matter, working in conjunction with Id Software, has added some neat graphical effects, and the gameplay is full of Wolfenstein 3D reminders. It's due this autumn.



Bioware RPG Neverwinter Nights was being demoed behind closed doors at E3, and marked a highlight of the show for many people.

A traditional Bioware RPG in the mould of Baldur's Gate, but featuring a 3D engine derived from the excellent Infinity engine used in MDK2, its chief selling point is that it ships with the editor and tools used to create the game.

Bioware's demo took the form of a ten-minute demonstration of the editor, building a simple dungeon level complete with enemies, objects, some dialogue and a boss creature. The second part of the demo involved playing the level we had just seen being created.

Multiplayer will also feature strongly - players can take the role of Dungeon Master and control many aspects of the game. Dungeons can also be linked to form makeshift "persistent worlds".

The speed and power of Bioware's toolset was impressive; the 3D engine also made a big impact on the crowd. Neverwinter Nights looks like being a must for RPG fans.



Medal of Honour

Easily one of the most popular "attractions" at this year's E3, Medal of Honor: Allied Assault on PC, was being demoed every half an hour in a small, closed theatre.

At any given time, a line of over 50 people stretched around EA's booth all vying for a seat in the 15 minute show.

The first level is strongly reminiscent of Spielberg's blockbuster war movie Saving Private Ryan and the terrifyingly realistic scene at the beginning to the film when the Allies invaded Normandy Beach on D-Day.

Some nice touches demonstrated in this level included the rain effects, the ability to demolish entire buildings in the "highly destructible interactive environment," and ladder climbing being represented realistically for the first time ever in a FPS.



Jedi Knight II

Lucas Arts chose the first day of E3 to unveil the long-awaited sequel to FPS Jedi Knight.

The new game, based on the Quake 3 engine, and being developed by Raven, uses a mixture of first and third-person viewpoints, and features some fantastic reflective effects and dynamic lighting: the lightsabers even left scorch marks in the walls. Considering the title had been in development for just ten weeks, Raven's progress was almost unbelievable.



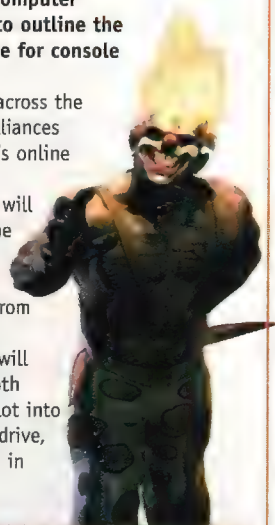
PS2 online by 2002

Jack Tretton, Senior Vice President of Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA), spoke at E3 to outline the company's intention to lead the online charge for console gaming.

Speaking to the audience of journalists from across the world, Tretton announced numerous strategic alliances Sony had recently signed to ensure the console's online capabilities are fully operational by 2002.

The deals with AOL, Real Networks, and Cisco will deliver PS2 gamers with the ability to access the Internet and stream both video and audio content, send email and communicate during games in realtime - without having to change from their current service providers.

To enable connection to these services, Sony will release a network adaptor which will provide both analogue and ethernet slots. The adaptor will slot into the back of the console along with a hard disc drive, with a 40Gb storage capacity, which will launch in November 2001 in the US.



PS2 games galore!

At a pre-E3 press conference Sony revealed it would be launching over 200 new PlayStation2 titles before the end of 2001. The company is also planning to spend over \$250m on marketing for both the PS One and PlayStation2 consoles in the year ahead.

Heading up the list was Gran Turismo 3 A-spec, which has been confirmed for release in the US on July 10. To mark the release of this massively anticipated racing game, Sony plans to release the game packaged with the PlayStation2 console.

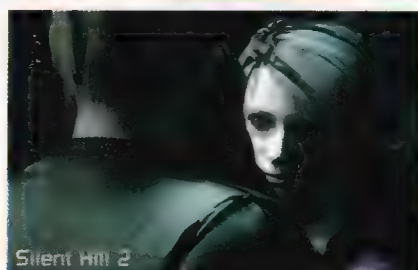
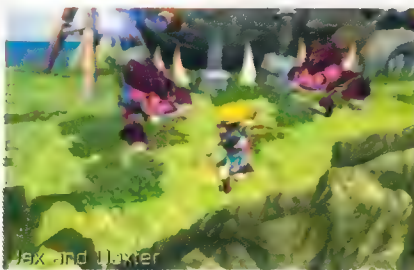
Sony also provided detailed demonstrations of Silent Hill 2, Metal Gear Solid 2, NBA Street, Twisted Metal Online, Jax and Daxter, SOCOM US Navy Seals, Final Fantasy X and Madden 2002, demonstrating the sheer quality of titles planned for console.

Silent Hill 2 was described by Gozo Kitao, the game's Executive Producer, as a special psychological horror that couldn't be fully experienced in any other form of interactive entertainment. It will use impressive fog and life-like lighting effects to create a unique tension within its dark and gloomy environments.

Jax and Daxter is currently being developed by Naughty Dog, creators of the Crash Bandicoot series. Playing as a 3D action/adventure game, the demonstration confirmed the developers' wish to produce an immersive and seamless game within an expansive realtime environment had been fulfilled.

While a movie of Final Fantasy X wowed onlookers with perhaps the finest visuals yet seen on the PlayStation2, sadly there was no actual in-game demonstration of this massively-anticipated RPG.

Rounding off the game-fest was SOCOM US Navy Seals, which will be an online military action game, developed in-house at Sony. Set in countries ranging from Alaska to Thailand, players will be able to battle through strategic situations, such as kidnappings and ambushes by directing their team members with voice-commands, using Sony's voice-recognition headset. In its online mode, the game will support up to 16 players from across the world, competing against each other.



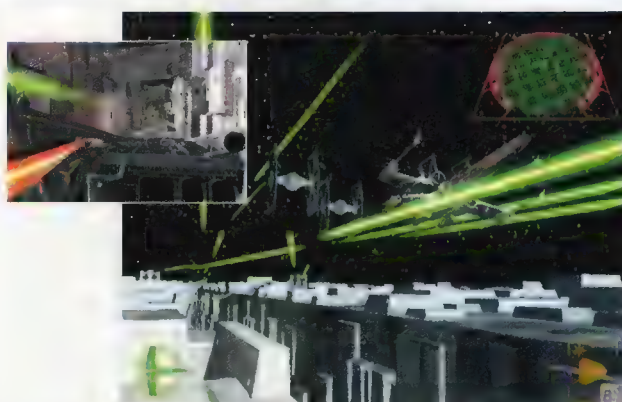
No UK release date for Gamecube yet

Nintendo has finally revealed the Gamecube's US and Japanese release dates - but has stayed tight-lipped on the subject of when UK gamers can expect to see its new machine.

The 'cube will hit the streets of Japan on September 14 this year with US stores being able to sell the next-gen machine at a price-point of \$199 less than two months later, on November 5. The European launch is widely rumoured to be set for Spring 2002 but nothing was confirmed at the E3 expo.

Significantly, its US launch will be a mere three days before Microsoft's recently announced launch date for the Xbox, which will see the two companies go head to head.

Several peripherals will be available with the Gamecube's launch, most notably a 56k modem.



Rogue Leader revealed

If there was ever any doubt as to the graphical capabilities of the Gamecube, **Rogue Leader** ought to crush them completely.

The sequel to the N64 title *Rogue Squadron*, *Rogue Leader* lets players take the helm of one of a number of starfighters from the classic Star Wars movies, including the X-Wing, B-Wing and A-Wing.

Rogue Squadron features 11 air-to-air and air-to-ground missions, including fights over the ice planet of Hoth and the infamous Death Star trench run. There will also be numerous bonus missions.

We were given the chance to play the game behind closed doors at Lucas Arts' booth. The crispness and speed of the game were astonishing, as was the intricate level of detail on many of the ships. Tom Byron, director of product marketing for LucasArts, described the game as "the closest thing to playing the movie that Lucas Arts has ever achieved". We're sure he's right.

Release set for Shenmue 2

Sega has revealed *Shenmue II* at E3, confirming details about the game and its release date.

Set for release this autumn, 2001, the sequel to Yu Suzuki's original game sees main character Ryo arriving in Hong Kong to continue avenging his father's murder by evil warlord, Lan Di.

The game promises a highly detailed world full of breath-taking scenery and environments including Taoism temples, tropical landscapes and mountainous wilderness. The 3D worlds will allow full interaction with almost everything you come into contact with.

A new navigational system allows you to map out your location and mark places you need or want to visit; the game also boasts a whole new cast of characters, gambling in Hong Kong and new enemies for you to fight. A new feature in the game is the Action Key, which allows you to ask questions that alter the impact of the interaction you have with other characters.

Finally "Advanced Weather" and "Time Control" technologies promise to deliver real-time world with moving 3D skies and changing terrain.



To subscribe to Games Domain Offline and receive a free copy of Soldier of Fortune Gold, just complete this form, call the hotline number below, or order online.

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The first version of Soldier of Fortune was received pretty well here at Games Domain (and in most other places, come to that). It's an action-heavy first-person shooter with a fantastic locational damage system, and vomit-inducingly realistic death scenes. But it drew some criticism for having daft enemies, limited multiplayer options and no bot support for single-player games. Soldier of Fortune Gold fixes all that.

Soldier of Fortune Gold Edition boasts the following new features:

- Reworked AI makes the enemies faster, better shots and more able to dodge incoming bullets
- New deathmatch modes, Conquer the Bunker (a "king-of-the-hill" style match) and Control, similar to Unreal Tournament Domination, gives players more variety
- Eighteen new levels
- Bot support, for more single-player fun.

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CONSOLE GAMES



SECTION

PIPELINES PREVIEWS REVIEWS

Will the Xbox become an ex-console?



Gareth Holden
Assistant Editor

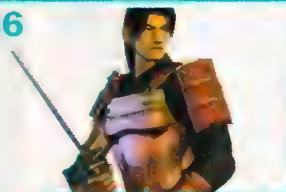
Despite all the hype and regurgitation about Microsoft's Xbox, I believe a rocky ride is in store for Bill Gates and his bottomline.

Speaking to many of the industry's PRs and journalists at E3 last month, the same word continued to plague discussions about the Xbox - disappointing! Microsoft assured everyone carried an Xbox bug and show floor browsers couldn't help but trip over the commanding Xbox stand. However, from the titles both the big M and third-party developers had to demonstrate, few people left the show convinced that the box would be the way forward.

While the PlayStation2's broadband capabilities and a full line-up of stunning titles were proudly being demonstrated, the Gamecube also basked in hopes of outshining with the likes of Rogue Leader II, Luigi's Mansion and Super Smash Bros. Melee. As a direct comparison, Tony Hawk's 2K on the Xbox was definitely overshadowed by Tony Hawk's 3 on the PlayStation2.

With the Gamecube's price not a massive \$100 cheaper than the Xbox and a price not expected for the PlayStation2 this Autumn, you have to wonder just how the Xbox will survive?

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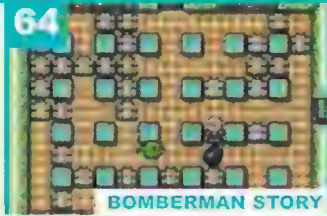
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ADVANCE GTA

Onimusha Warlords

Hack-and-slash comes of age on the PlayStation2 with dazzling results



■ Characters boast 10,000 polygons each, pushing the PS2 close to its limits

Inspired by the battle scenes of famed Japanese director, Akira Kurosawa, Capcom is preparing *Onimusha: Warlords* for European shores. Having already achieved critical acclaim from both Japanese and US gaming gurus, *Onimusha* is shaping up to chop the competition right down to size with some of the most impressive motion-captured, gore-infested battle action ever experienced in a video game.

Set in 16th century Japan, *Onimusha* is an

"Onimusha is shaping up to chop the competition right down to size"

epic saga, where warlords fight fiercely in hand-to-hand combat against one another, all in the name of power. Essentially, the aim of the game is to hack and slash your way through the hordes of enemies, mutilating each as you choose. Having scythed an enemy to the ground, you can then choose to really put the dagger in with a gruesome downward thrust into your opponent's upper torso, which is greeted with a claret fountain: not for those with a nervous disposition then! Fans of both *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis* will instantly feel at home with the control system, which continues the responsive, though slightly robust, movements. There'll even

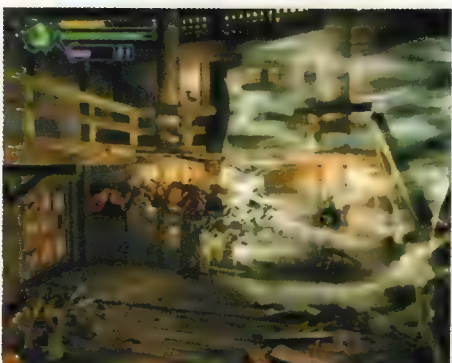
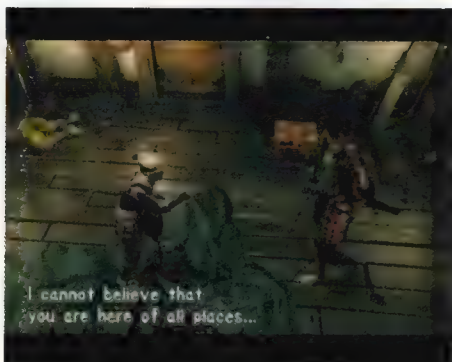
be a familiar inventory system. A unique weapons system will offer warriors gems, which can add various effects like fire, thunder and wind to your selected weapon. It will then be possible to use these to capture the life force of defeated enemies. The gems can also be used to gain access to otherwise inaccessible areas.

If you've been gob-smacked by the sheer tension and excitement created in Capcom's *Resident Evil* series, then prepare to be dazzled. *Onimusha*'s motion picture production values and

technical achievements include it being the first game to achieve six-person simultaneous motion-capturing: a feat that has already earned *Onimusha* an award at the SIGGRAPH 2000 Computer Animation Festival, beating off competition from films like *Mission Impossible* and *Fight Club*. A 200-piece orchestra will dominate the game's musical score, while famed Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro provides the voiceover and face for the lead character.

This will be one of the few titles so far to push the PlayStation2 close to its limits. With intricately-detailed 10,000-polygon characters, the game will also put the PS2's emotion engine through its paces to deliver convincing facial emotion and realistic animation, bringing the action to life.

Onimusha looks certain to shine like a samurai sword in the sun when it's released in summer.



■ Fans of Capcom's *Resident Evil* titles will recognise *Onimusha*'s lineage



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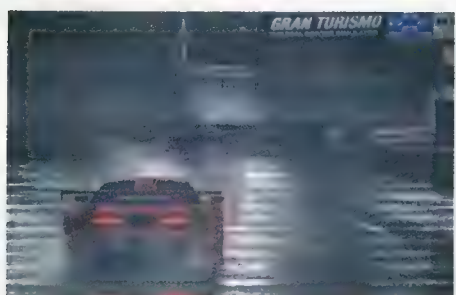
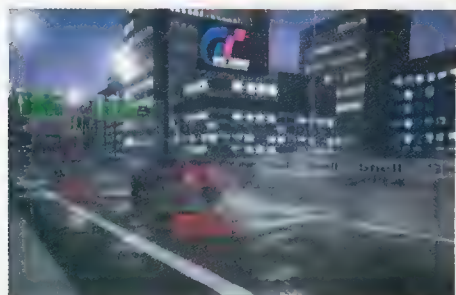
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Gran Turismo 3 - A spec

Gran Turismo has been souped-up and we've been putting it through its paces



Having experienced numerous delays, gameplay tweaks and even received a new moniker, Polyphony Digital's masterpiece is at last ready to be unveiled. We all knew it would offer more of the same action boosted by souped-up graphics, but what we didn't know was just how far Kazunori Yamauchi, president of Polyphony Digital, would be able to push the boundaries of virtual reality. Hot off the Japanese highway, this is the first title that will truly convince you to purchase a PlayStation2.

After a stunning intro sequence featuring pumping pistons, tyre smoke and dust clouds it's into the game itself. As GT veterans will be all too familiar, the choice between arcade and simulation mode provides a tantalising dilemma. Arcade mode offers instant access to the action, containing six areas labelled A to F. Each area features six tracks, which must be cleared on three levels of difficulty. Lower classes of cars include the likes of the Peugeot 206 S16 and Honda CR-X, while the higher classes include the real mean machines like the Nissan Skyline, Toyota Supra and the new Subaru Impreza. Circuits range from old faves like Trial Mountain to newcomers like Smokey Mountain and the Tahiti Circuit.

Using Sony's I-link cable in arcade mode, it is possible to go head-to-head with up to five friends across three PS2s for the ultimate in multiplayer action. Even though the graphics are slightly toned down, the pace is kept just as high. As before, this is great for pitting your tuned-up beast against the best your friend can offer.

GT3's most absorbing feature is its simulation mode. Starting out with 1,500,000 credits, you'll have to make do with the likes of Daihatsu, Toyota or Mazda and experiment with minor modifications. Later on, cars can be won from race series victories and prize money can be used for modifications to ramp up performance. There aren't as many tuning parts available as in previous versions, but the prospect of installing a turbo, intercooler and air filter with exhaust kit remains mouth-watering to transform your car's level of tarmac terrorism. Instead of having to trail around the dealers searching for the

"This is the first title that will truly convince you to purchase a PlayStation2"

optimal price for your used motor, you now simply sell it directly from your garage. The prices offered are substantially less than in previous games, which encourages you to build up an entire garage of machines, rather than flogging off slower cars to buy parts for your new toy.

While there aren't as many different models as in GT2, there are more than enough retained; once you see just how fine they look, we guarantee whining will never cross your mind. From MX5s to Mercedes, Acuras to Aston Martins, everyday road cars to exclusive sports models and special rally cars, each boast 3000-plus polygons and all are instantly recognisable. Dealers now only offer new cars, which again cuts down on unnecessary hassles of getting used motors, concentrating on the core of the

■ The night-time sequences are as stunning as the action during daylight



game. The game's presentation is also well worth a mention, polishing up all of the old and dull text-heavy menus with gleaming images and icons which load up remarkably quickly.

Earning your right to race comes in the form of six sets of driving licences from the "B" licence right up to the "R" Rally licence. Experienced GT players will cruise through each at the first attempt within the bronze medal time limit, although collecting all those golds will definitely take practice to near-perfection. The vast majority of tests are ripped straight from GT2, although several new tasks show off features like the game's wet weather conditions. Taming the wet weather test with the Corvette is a handful for even the most experienced GT driver! It would have been nice to see some new tests, especially novelty ones, like the donut-test in the Imprezza from GT1, but you'll be so busy gorging at the game's visual splendour, it'll seem like a whole new set of tests anyway!

Once again this instalment of GT surpasses the last for offering a seemingly limitless number of different races. Starting out with single races within cups such as the Clubman Cup, FR Challenge and Audi TT event, you'll then progress on to more testing challenges, such as the leagues, where you have to compete in consecutive races and aim to finish triumphant. Then there's the endurance modes, rally challenges and the many bonuses that need to be unlocked.

Although, predictably, GT3 is more of the same, it offers so much more. Cars handle perfectly: take out an executive saloon like the Mercedes C class and, sure enough, it handles heavily; opt for a Toyota MR2 and it has a lighter feel, with a much zippier edge. You start off slowly in tame super-minis and endure one of the finest game learning curves ever created, so that by the time you get behind the wheel of the super cars, you'll appreciate just how they should be driven. Only Polyphony Digital has ever managed to capture this sensation with so much precision, making it such a pleasure to

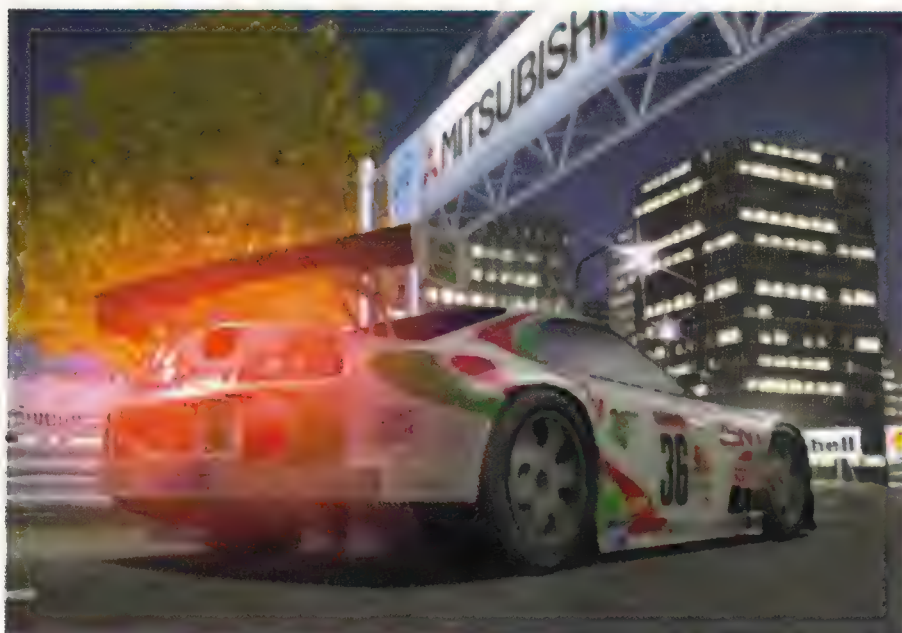


■ Floor the throttle and see the needle race up the speedo



■ The race environments are lavishly depicted and truly impressive





drive a newly acquired vehicle. Performance upgrades make an instantly noticeable difference and the feeling of then conquering a tough race is ultimately rewarding. Because of a tighter limit on race credits, it's also much harder to simply opt for a car class above the competition to blast them away without having to drive particularly well.

From the green light to the first corner, it becomes immediately apparent whether you'll be leagues ahead of the five other cars, have a chance of challenging for the lead or simply picking up the tail. Lining up on the starting grid, you're never quite sure just what might be lurking under your rivals' bonnets. The real fun emerges as you discover your car's true potential against endless opponents - take the new Renault Clio V6 out for a spin and you'll be surprised at who'll be left choking on your exhaust emissions! Alternatively, boost the Imprezza's performance through the ceiling and you won't find many cars capable of sticking to your tail, especially with its superior 4WD traction.

You really have to experience GT3 in motion to appreciate just how groundbreaking its visual quality is. It far outshines any other racing game on any console and looks even better than many of the latest arcade machines! The PS2's power has been pushed right to capacity, and

while the cars look real, the tracks themselves are even better! Some of the particle effects like tyre smoke and the dust clouds churned up on rally sections are absolutely astonishing.

With such a phenomenal improvement of what was already set in stone as the benchmark standard for driving games, it's hard to make a point of any faults it may have. Cynics may highlight the game's lack of realism in terms of crash damage and high-speed collisions, but this has always been a feature of the game and often

"You have to witness GT3 in motion to fully appreciate its groundbreaking visual quality"

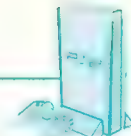
helps to ensure races go right to the wire for a true edge-of-the-seat experience.

Sonically, artists like Lenny Kravitz, Ash and Death in Vegas provide the icing on the cake. Special sound effects range from the throaty growl of tuned engines to screeching tyre sounds, which are naturally reverberated every time you pass through a tunnel.

Gran Turismo 3 more than lives up to all the hype and proves itself streets ahead in the racing genre, combining deep gameplay, supremely accurate physics and awe-inspiring visuals. GT3 is reason enough to finally warrant upgrading to a PlayStation2.

■ Keep your wits about you: GT3's handling takes no prisoners





Red Faction

Prepare to lock, load and be blown away by this stunning FPS



The GDD staff turned nasty after finding someone had used the last of the milk.

The first-person shoot 'em up has yet to make a real dent in the console market. With a few exceptions the genre has never really made its mark with even long-standing PC franchises struggling to keep their end up. The hotly anticipated Red Faction may just be the title to break with tradition when it is released on PlayStation2 this month with the promise of fully destructible levels for you to blow your way through, and fast-paced, gun-wielding gameplay for the trigger-happy console gamers among us.

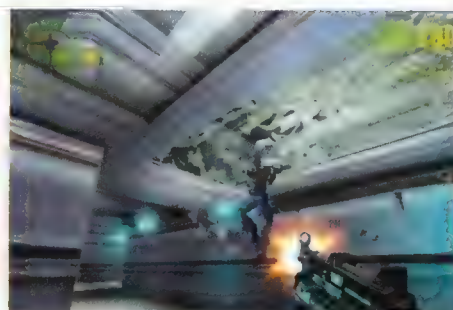
An ugly revolution is taking place. The miners that work for the huge and fascist corporation, Ultor, have risen up against their bosses and are waging a war against them, starting deep in the mines. You are Parker: a miner thrown into the middle of the revolt of these rebels - the Red Faction. Your mission is to kill any enemies that get in your way, bring down some of the fascist movement's key leaders, destroy their security systems, communications and power supplies and get out of there before it's too late. Thankfully, there are a few people who help you along the way. Hendrix, your comms man, gives you constant reassurance from his warm and safe office somewhere in Ultor's complex. You are also joined by fellow miners and leaders of the Red Faction at certain points in the game, who point you in the right direction or help you fight off the enemy hordes.

The Geo-Mod technology that allows you to destroy the environment around you at will has been the major focus of pre-release build-up. Believe the hype: it is absolutely fantastic. You can pretty much destroy anything you see

(unless it is made of metal) with the weapons available to you. Blasting through walls with rockets and mines, smashing glass with machine and other handguns - let it rip. You are strongly advised to make the most of the game's technology and at have at least one all-out, ammo-emptying session: blowing up walls, making holes in floors and taking out panes of glass with your Uzi. Smashing fun! Although it looks and feels great, you have to use the

technology to progress in one way or another rather than simply using it to see how much devastation

"Believe the hype: Red Faction is fantastic"

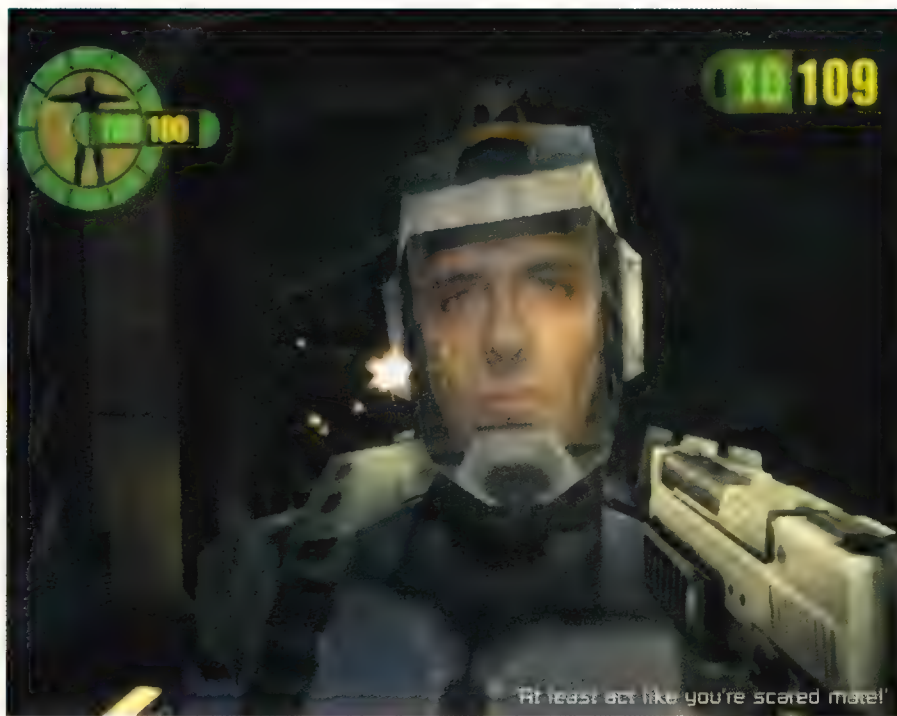
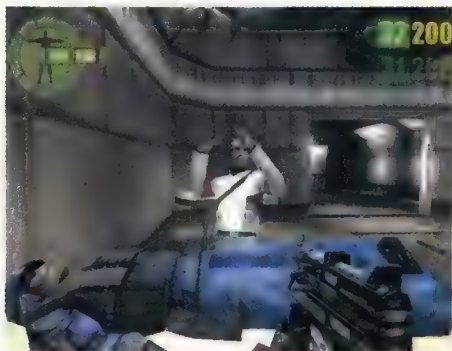


■ 'Watch where you're pointing that thing love!'





Karate punch!



At least act like you're scared mate!

you can cause. As an example, in one of the latter sections of the game you have to escape through a grate in the side of a mountain wall. Taking one of your remote mines, or your rocket launcher, you have to blow a hole behind the grate and its locking mechanism so you can squeeze through into the vent that leads off it. This type of objective can be found throughout the game and adds another dimension to your thought processes as you assess where to place explosives or what you need to achieve to progress.

Alongside the huge amounts of rubble that the Geo-Mod technology allows you to make, actual gameplay consists of bringing down a mass of enemies and completing objectives; it is furiously fast-paced, especially on the more advanced difficulty settings. There are a handful of major missions across 20 levels covering environments including the deep seas of Mars, natural caves inhabited by bats and the Ultor Corporation's bases. Aside from your primary objectives, you have to make your way through other obstacles, such as finding the safest route through a series of camera-covered corridors or simply finding the switch to activate a door. The major tasks you need to complete include rescuing one of Ultor's top men and bringing him home safely and disarming a bomb before it destroys you and the rest of the Red Faction. It's high-octane stuff and hard to put down as you are thrown into each and every mission with urgency and huge amounts of visual and audio interaction.

The interactive environment the game is set in holds lots of things for you to use to aid your mission, and a few that are simply just fun to play with. First up are the security camera control panels. You can access any of them to view rooms that you may not have entered yet. A good tool, especially in the areas of the game where stealth is of the essence. Another key feature in these levels is that you can actually

pick up the people you kill and hide them behind boxes or even in lockers: essential to cover your tracks and keep those sirens from going off. You can also interact with some of the people you meet along the way. It's probably not the best idea to strike up a conversation about the weather with an enemy guard holding a shotgun, but any medic you find will heal you if you're injured and you approach them (that's if you don't have the urge to shoot them first - oops). There's also a brilliant little training session, accessed from the game's main menu, which is well worth a look.

You start your revolt with a lowly control baton (a kind of electrified policeman's truncheon). But, fear not, the range of weapons is immense. Machine-guns, mines, shotguns, rocket launchers and other assorted artillery are at your disposal and each has, in most cases, a

"PS2 owners could have just landed their very own bit of FPS heaven"

hugely-impressive alternative fire button and can be used to cause some really devastating carnage. Just when you think you've got the biggest and best weapon you're going to get, you find yet another mean-looking gun; the time you have between finding each of your 'new best friends' is spaced out so that there's always something new to try.

Aside from the sections of the game where you are on foot and armed to the teeth, you also get to pilot a range of great vehicles. These range from huge rock-drilling machines to mini-sub and jeeps. The action and movement in each of them is subtle and well designed to imitate the actual motion you would get if piloting them for real. The underwater sections of the game are moody and beautifully lit and the jeep handling sections really stick out as being well-paced and interesting to play as first you man a mounted



■ Rentakil's new pest control unit seemed to be working a treat



■ The mini-sub is just one of the great vehicles you get to pilot





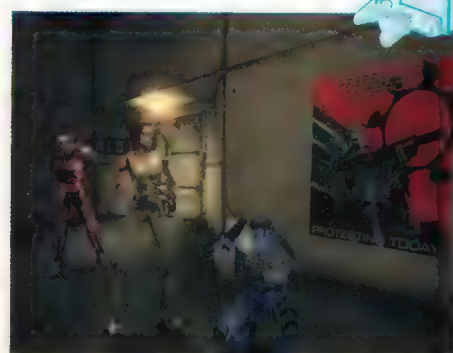
gun while another miner drives and then you take the wheel yourself.

Multiplayer games are just as well balanced, with split-screen deathmatch action against another human player and up to four bots; you can also challenge up to six bots in one-player deathmatch battle. The brilliantly configured controller - an integral part of successfully bringing a FPS to a console - is done in such a way that you have full scope to swing around and move about quickly and efficiently. This makes your on-screen movement smooth and the game as a whole really accessible and easy to pick up and play. Visually the game looks stunning and the audio interaction with Hendrix and the other Red Faction members you come across adds to the dynamic, as do the shouts and screams of your enemy and the accompanying thumping futuristic soundtrack as you go about your business.

Final verdict: Red Faction is hot to trot. With the developers saying there may be more titles in the series to follow, PS2 owners could have just landed their very own little bit of FPS heaven. If you're a fan of the genre in general, or have yet to be convinced that consoles can handle a FPS without a keyboard and mouse, take a look at Red Faction. It may just blow your mind!



■ 'Your hair's alright love. It's your face and that outfit you should worry about!'



■ When all else fails get down on your knees (with a big gun) and pray



WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

THE LEGACY CONTINUES.....

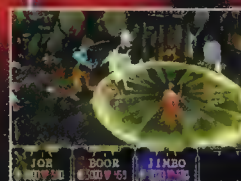


"This is a must for those hankering after some arcade thrills!"

4/5



- 4 Player cooperative action!
- 8 Different realms!
- 60 Levels!
- Dozens of attack combos!



GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY

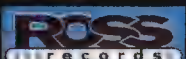
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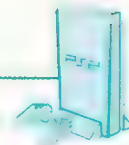


PlayStation 2

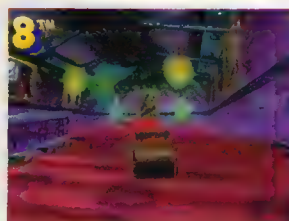


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Wacky Races



The most daredevil group of daffy drivers to ever whirl their wheels arrive on PS2



In the days before *The Simpsons* and *South Park*, we had to make do with cartoons that weren't based on real-life issues for a dose of rib-tickling humour. Instead, we were treated to madcap of cartoons such as *Scooby Doo* and *Wacky Races*.

Thanks to Infogrames, it's now possible to relive those happy days, just like your very own interactive cartoon, where you get a chance to call the shots.

Arcade mode is more of a quick-fix for petrol-

up an essential part of the race.

As Mario Kart fans will know all too well, no matter how much you get your head down and race straight for the finish, someone will always ruin your chances with a craftily-deployed power-up. Therefore, you'll need to rely on racing skills, tactical use of power-ups and taking plenty of devious short-cuts to outwit the other racers.

Wacky Races is both one of the most infuriating and rewarding experiences you'll come across on the PS2. There's the ultimate high of race triumph and the dismal lows of being stitched up just before the finish line. Indeed the AI can be a real pain, making computer opponents more than a handful to shake off;

either you hit them and they almost immediately carry on or they'll bombard you in numbers, knocking you right back to eighth position. Definitely though, the game is at its forté with four players blasting the living proverbial out of each other.

From the eye-catching cel-shaded graphics to the wacky sound effects, you can't help but smile at how well the game recreates the cartoon's hilarity. While it doesn't have the longevity of the mighty Mario Kart (but then what does?) it still manages to keep cartoon race fans interested enough to warrant the asking price.

"Wacky Races is one of the most infuriating and rewarding experiences on the PS2"

heads, offering one-off races, cups and time trials, while Adventure mode allows you to visit differently themed areas, each offering a set of consecutive challenges, which initially are cleared by winning races.

Of course, the stars of the show can be seen in all their cartoon glory, including everyone from Peter Perfect to The Slagg Bros. Each set of crazy characters has a uniquely styled set of three power-ups - usually a go-faster one, a weapon and a shield - and is fuelled by a "wacky coin" which lasts either for one shot or a few seconds, depending on the actual power-up. Wacky Coins can be collected on route and make

JUDGEMENT

☐ FUNNY ☐ ENTERTAINING
☐ EASY TO PLAY ☐ INFOGRAPHICS
☐ GRAPHICS ☐ SOUNDTRACK
☐ VALUE FOR MONEY

Overall: ☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor
 Editor: ☐ Chris ☐ Mark

A Breathtakingly clever and entertaining game
 A Breathtakingly clever and entertaining game
 A Breathtakingly clever and entertaining game
 A Breathtakingly clever and entertaining game
 A Breathtakingly clever and entertaining game

7

WORDS: GARETH HOLDEN

WIN A PlayStation®2



AND A COPY OF
GAUNTLET
DARK LEGACY



PLUS
4 Runners-up prizes of
Gauntlet Dark Legacy

Waitin' for the price of a PlayStation2 to fall? Why wait when you could win one - plus a copy of Gauntlet Dark Legacy - in this stunning competition, brought to you by GDD and Midway? Four runners-up will also get a copy of Gauntlet Dark Legacy, a game about ghouls and goblins where you have to find the magic rune stones and use their power to win the day before it's too late! To enter, simply phone the competition hotline below, follow the instructions and answer the following question:

In the game Gauntlet Dark Legacy, what magic stones do you need to find to save the day?

- a) Gem stones
- b) Rune stones
- c) Gall bladder stones

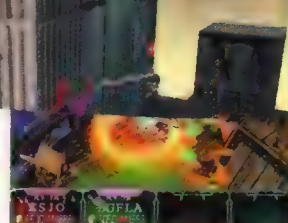
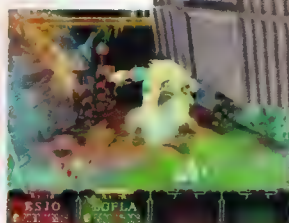
COMPETITION HOTLINE

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Entry to this competition is by competition hotline only. Follow the instructions on the line and remember to speak clearly. Calls cost 50p per minute and should just take over a minute. Always ask the person who pays the phone bill for permission before making your call.

Gal

Ghosts and goblins and



Midway's second attempt at bringing the long-running Gauntlet franchise to the PS2 is released this month. The usual ghouls and goblins-based scenario sets the scene. A great evil has taken the only things that can keep it under control - in this case the magic held in some rune stones - and scattered them around your world. The only chance you have of saving the day is by finding all the stones and using their power to win the day before it's all just too late.

quest. Alongside the smaller enemy types, there is also a range of bigger foes to bring down; if successfully vanquished, you will be awarded with icons and slightly better booty which will aid your fight against the boss characters that await you at the end of each realm.

Good things about the game? Well it certainly does have that retro feel to it: even down to the game commentator's huge booming voice and quirky, but atmospheric soundtrack and sound effects. Although gameplay is very linear, there are plenty of items to retrieve and enemies to kill and it's actually quite a relaxing play in a funny sort of way. Graphically it looks great and when more than one player is involved the on-screen action gets frantic and is visually stunning.

Unfortunately there are a couple of problems that make *Dark Legacy* a bit of a letdown. Firstly your birds-eye viewpoint is somewhat restricted, meaning you occasionally walk off one screen and straight into a batch of monsters baying for your blood on the next. The linear gameplay may bore some and there are some seemingly impossible parts of the game where starting the level again and retracing your steps is essential.

The game is basically a retouched blast from the past that holds up quite well on the PS2, but it's nothing new. Nostalgia seekers only need apply.

"When more than one player is on-screen, the action gets frantic and is visually stunning"

There are eight primary characters for you to play as and some secret characters for you to unlock - which brings the body count to 16 in all. You can play in single-player mode or up to four can play exactly the same missions as you would play through by yourself - which gets interesting to say the least.

As you play through the eight realms in settings that include the mountains, forest, castle and sky, you have to use your magic, weaponry and mental agility to make it through a host of baddies. You also have to collect keys and chests, which contain good and sometimes very bad things that may help or hinder your

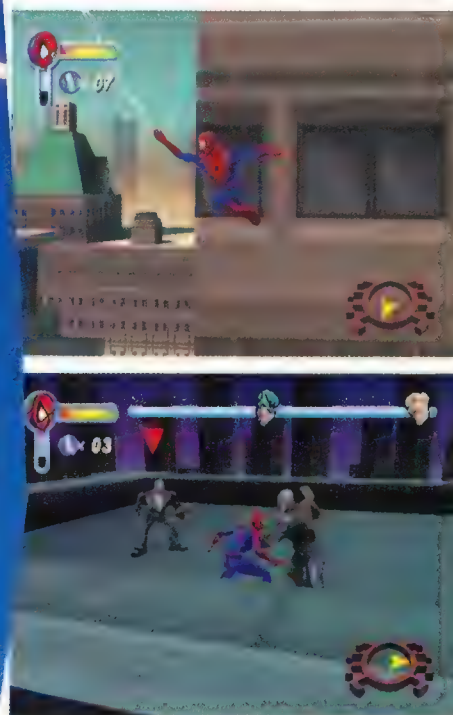


WIN A PlayStation

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■ In that instant, Spidey realised there were better ways to travel than by web



■ Woah! Everthing's upside-down. Not quite got the hang of this yet I don't think!

Undoubtedly the greatest things about being a kid, aside from eating dirt, is being able to imitate your favourite superhero: running around annoying your parents dressed in your Spider-Man pyjamas with the debris from your last meal of spaghetti hoops hanging around the corners of your mouth.

With Spidey sense tingling (or is it just a nasty rash from the cheap material your comical bedwear is made from?) you rush through your parents' house throwing yourself around and pretending that you can indeed walk up walls. Inevitably the result is a trip to casualty after you stalked the imaginary bad guys into the cupboard where your folks keep all the sharp things. Oh well.

As you get a little older, and hopefully a bit wiser, you try to refrain from eating mud and glue sandwiches but it's still fun imagining being a superhero; this time it's Activision's Spider-Man for the Dreamcast which will let you live out your impish dreams.

If you haven't played the PlayStation or N64 versions of Spider-Man, here's the storyline. Doctor Octavius has a crazy, sexy, cool new invention that he is introducing to the public. During the press conference for this invention, Spider-Man himself swoops in and steals the Doc's new gadget. But here's the rub: press geek Peter Parker, the real web-head, is in attendance and realises that he has been framed. So Spidey has to tackle an assortment of social and physical misfits in order to clear his name. This perilous road isn't lined with pixies and ice cream, but rather with goons like Venom,

Carnage, Mysterio, Doctor Octopus, and the NYPD. Woop! Woop! That's the sound of the police.

Spidey, however, has a few tricks, or should I say web cartridges, up his sleeve to help him in his journey. The primary use of the webbing is to swing from building to building, but Spidey can also use the webbing in both an offensive and defensive manner. Spider-Man is quite the jack-of-all-trades with his infamous webs, and, in this game, he uses them in a variety of ways. The wall crawler can tangle his adversaries with a blanket of webbing, he can cover his hands

"Graphics are fantastic: levels come alive with lush colours and textures"

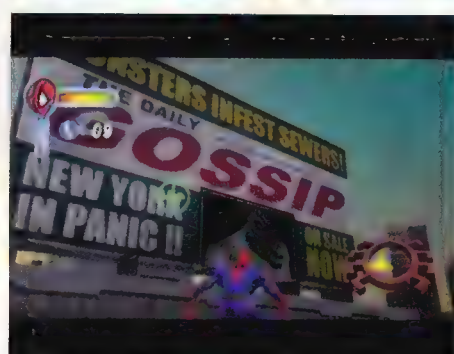
with web-eriffic quasi-boxing gloves, he can instantaneously build an exploding web-dome, and he can yank baddies into walls or off skyscrapers. Those are the details. Now, let me get to the good stuff that sets this DC instalment apart from the rest.

As one would expect, the graphics in the DC version of Spider-Man are fantastic. The levels come alive with lush colour and textures. The subterranean levels are covered in green, mushy sewage and little touches, like the intricate bumps on the metallic grates, show that the level of detail is definitely kicked up a notch. Bam!

The characters themselves have also gone through a graphical overhaul. The Spider is beautifully rendered with rich colours and a more defined physique. Granted, he is the main



While the camera problem cannot simply be swept under the rug, it doesn't destroy the game's overall playability and replayability (getting the Symbiote Spidey outfit is a blast). Spider-Man for the Dreamcast is a very worthwhile title to get your hands on, especially if you haven't played it to death on the PSX and N64.



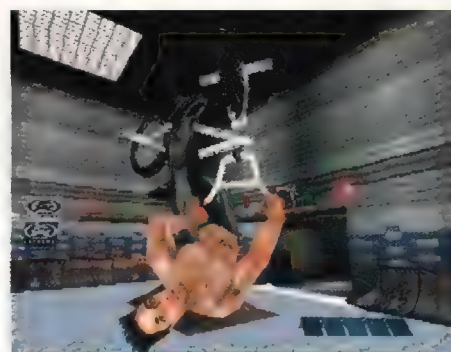
WORDS: GABE ABARCA

Mat Hoffman's BMX

A challenger to the playability crown of Tony Hawk's, or a poor clone?



Getting up there is easy - it's landing that causes the problems



■ Mat reacted instinctively when he discovered a drawing-pin on his seat



■ Be careful on landing or you'll seriously disappoint your future wife

It has been delayed for over six months with rumours of a lacklustre game, and news reports tell us that the development team of Runecraft have been relieved of duty for the sequel. So what does the long-awaited brother to the Tony Hawk series of games have in store for us?

Are you ready to be disappointed? Chances are like us you were expecting something special. After all, the game has an impressive lineage descending from the two Neversoft classics released to popular acclaim in the last two years. Utilising a (cough) enhanced version of the original Tony Hawk's engine and Mat Hoffman's grinning face endorsing the product, all looked good for the delivery of the BMX equivalent of the skater's dream game. Somewhere, however, it looks like the development did something nasty and ended up in traction.

It's hard to imagine when you are playing Mat Hoffman's that this game has been released a good eight months after Tony Hawk's 2. Many will have played the demo and come away unimpressed with what they were served. Here's the news kids: the game hasn't changed a bit from what you saw all those many months ago. In fact, with the full version at our disposal, it seems like we have been served up a poor version of the original Tony Hawk's game with the sole addition of a bike instead of a skateboard.

Little things give it away, like the fact there are five challenges on each level. That these challenges earn you magazine covers rather than videotapes, and that the challenges are virtually

identical to those posed in the original Hawk's game. A high score, an even higher score, collect five letters, collect five objects and 'find the hidden tape'. Great. Haven't done that before.

Menus and selection screens all look identical to Tony Hawk's. We were left wondering how it took Runecraft so long to change the skaters into bikers because that seems to be all they have done. Of course, some may argue that the game should be similar in appearance and gameplay. However, surely an add-on pack to Tony Hawk's - with more levels and different

"Expecting something special? Prepare to be disappointed"

player models - would have done the trick equally well; to be honest this is nothing more than that.

It is no surprise to learn that the controls function in exactly the same fashion as Tony Hawk's, and anyone with skills learnt in that game will take very little time to clock this. That's not to say that it plays exactly the same as it's half-cousin twice removed. There are many little things that let the play mechanics down. For a start, there appears to be no equivalent to a boneless or fastplant to help vert trick combos or to clear large gaps. Second, there are no wall rides or wallies; add to that the fact that the manuals are a lot less useful than they are in Tony Hawk's 2 and the nuances that made the skate game so good are non-



■ You don't learn this on a cycle proficiency course

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☐ THE KID
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+ A step up from the original Tony Hawk's game

+ Nice soundtrack

- Uninspired follow-up

- Sluggish controls

- A big disappointment

existent. Also making the controls slightly sluggish to approximate the differences in BMX and skate control is amusing to say the least.

The level design is fairly good though, with some new ideas thrown into the mix. They still don't hold up to the great design in Tony Hawk's 2 however, and with only five challenges per level it falls into the trap the original Tony Hawk's did by providing little replay value. Take note, the bolt-on level editor does not constitute an argument for replayability.

On the plus side, the music isn't half bad with the usual mix of punk and rap. We were even surprised to hear a ten-year-old Paris tune on the soundtrack: kudos for including that! Still, it won't float everyone's boat but the music is appropriate for the genre.

With the game being held back and developers Runecraft asked to move along it's not surprising to see that Mat Hoffman's has turned out this way. A shame really because we were really looking forward to a good BMX game. Back to Tony Hawk's it is then.

It's not a bad game, just that it's not really that good either. If you want to play a contrived level pack for the original version of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater then go out and buy this game. If not, close your eyes, pretend it doesn't exist and wait for Tony Hawk's 3.

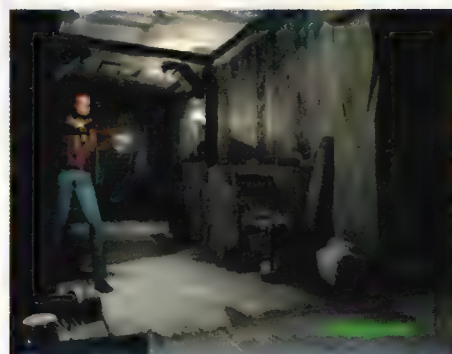
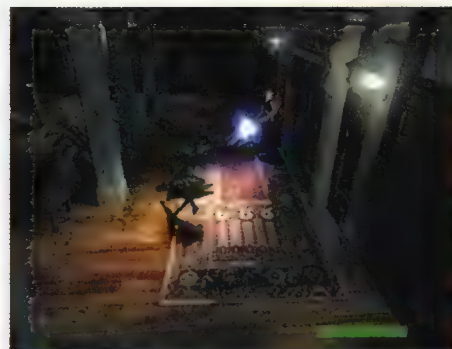
It's only a dream, it's only a dream, it's only a dream...

Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare

Time to dig out your brown trousers again: Alone In The Dark is back!



A 000 employee searches in vain for back-copies of the Xbox issue



Scared of the dark? Thick as pig muck? Then maybe you shouldn't read on. The latest offering from the Alone in the Dark franchise is for gamers with strong stomachs, great eyesight and brains that would put Einstein to shame.

Our main man, and your body for half of the game, is Carnby whose best friend Fiske has vanished on the mysterious Shadow Island. Determined to find him and intrigued by what might be going on, Carnby and his female sidekick Aline Cedrac travel to the island. After making an emergency parachute drop from their crashing plane the pair get split up and find themselves alone in the dark, surrounded by horrific creatures and caught in a web of sordid

scientific experiments and macabre happenings.

You play the game by first choosing one of the two characters to explore the island and its buildings with. After completing the trials and tribulations of Carnby you can then go back and play as Aline, or do the whole thing vice versa if you want. This works really well, with interweaving sections of the game coming into play as the two communicate via their radios, help each other out and occasionally meet to swap the items they have found. On both counts you have to navigate a range of spooky and sinister levels, ranging from the moors and swamps near your crashed plane to the bizarre tunnels and horrific chasms that open up towards the end of the

game. One thing key to your mission is your trusty torch which handily seems to be permanently super-glued to your palm. Without using it you won't be able to pinpoint items that you need or even make your way through some sections of the game. It also gives the title as a whole that trademark 'Alone in the Dark' feel as you flash your way around the levels (that's with your torch, not your dirty old raincoat).

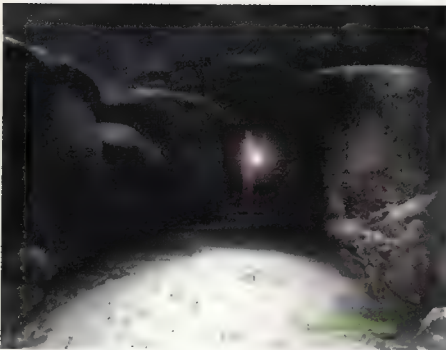
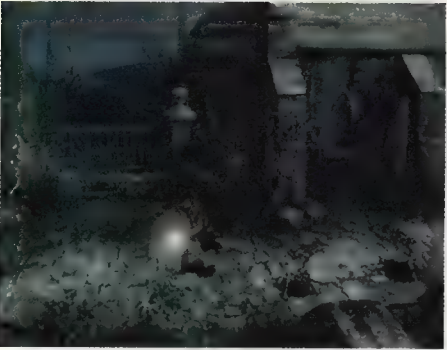
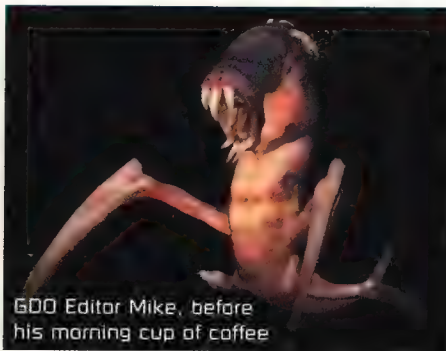
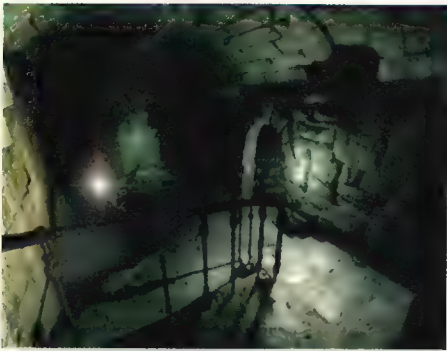
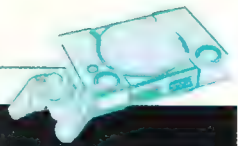
Action at the beginning of the game in terms of how many ghastly creatures you have to kill is a little slow, but don't let that fool you. Every

"With the lights off you'll be filling your pants at the rate of an elephant with diarrhoea"

time you relax and forget that enemies may be lurking, you get a nasty fright. Play it with the lights down low and headphones or surround sound on and you'll be filling your pants at the rate of an elephant with diarrhoea - fantastically frightening stuff! Later on in the game as your arsenal of weapons expands, there's more full on carnage of a Resident Evil-style proportion: enough for any survival horror fanatic. In this sense the game really achieves what it sets out to and your own paranoia is skillfully heightened as you wander around the levels, gripping your controller and just waiting for that next surprise attack to catch you out and make you scream like a girl.

The exploration and item-retrieval elements are great and provide the real meat of the gameplay.

■ Meat Loaf comes to the rescue
Don't sing Meat: it's bad!



Some puzzles are tricky and hard to grasp at first, especially if you're more used to 'push switch A to open door B' action titles. The investigative work that you do on Shadow Island is subtle and promotes the feeling that you are more of an intellectual sleuth type with a gun rather than just a muscle-clad action hero who occasionally has to figure out what's going on. Having a keen eye for detail (and markings on walls and floors) will help guide you through the objectives you need to meet in order to progress. But be warned: retracing your steps through the dark may be your only way forward if you miss something small but vitally important.



Although all these positive attributes make the game a joy to play for the most part, there are features that could have contributed more to the title if they had turned out better. Graphically your surroundings are quite blocky - there are worse still visually when you switch your torch off. Generally they look substandard compared to other PlayStation third-person action games on the market and incongruous when set against the title's own stunning computer-generated movies that introduce and help to develop the game's plot throughout. Finally, the interface that you use to scroll through your weapons, items and documents you have found is a little slow to appear when requested and, hence, annoying to use - especially in frantic moments.

If you're a gamer that looks for a mass of things to kill, rather than a host of puzzles to solve, you may find the first sections of the game rather tedious. With perseverance, however, *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare* has a lot to offer: the puzzles, storyline and action are great. Even with its dodgy graphics and other niggling problems, *Alone in the Dark* will still make you jump - even with the lights on.



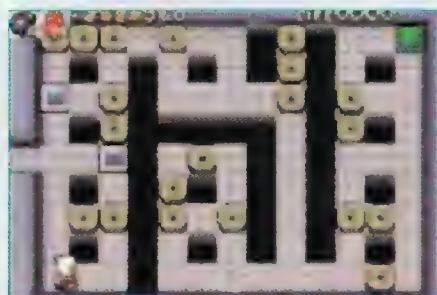
■ Torch-flashing is an integral part of your adventure



WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

Bomberman Story

■ PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER: HUDSON ■ FORMAT: GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ RELEASE: JULY 6



For multiplayer madness, few games can boast the qualities of Bomberman: a game that didn't rely on jaw-dropping graphics or a complicated plot, just devilishly simple and addictive gameplay. Dropping bombs to blow up tiles of an arena, gaining power-ups and disposing of your opponents - what could be simpler?

It's great to see Bomberman's core gameplay retained for this latest incarnation on Nintendo's petite powerhouse, the Game Boy Advance. Two game modes are on offer, the first an adventure mode, where players jump into the

your power-ups. Thankfully, plenty of shacks are on hand housing locals who offer helpful hints and useful items for your quest. While this mode provides another new adventure for the tiny bomb-blasting character, it won't be long before you revert to the classic style of play, which makes up the second game mode.

Though the action is shrunk down to fit onto the GBA, it doesn't lose one smidgen of its playability and retains every one of the fantastic characteristics that made the original so successful, including four-player fun, via three link cables. Opting for either the classic tile layout or more complicated ones with moving conveyor belts, pipes and warps; there's a level to suit every standard of Bomberman player. All of your favourite power-ups are also included - from extra bombs to the ability to kick and throw them - which never fails to spice up the proceedings. Those killed off early are then allowed to hurl in bombs from the sidelines, which is great for frustrating those still left in the arena. Even a new fishing mode has been cast in, which allows the triumphant player to fish for a character-enhancing power-up.

Quite simply, Bomberman Story crams in all the elements you loved from the original and even adds an all-new single player mode. However, it's the multiplayer link-up mode that really makes this an essential purchase.

"All the elements you loved in the original have been crammed in"

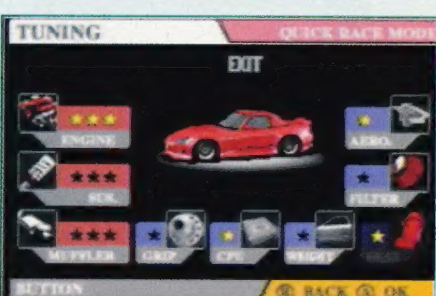
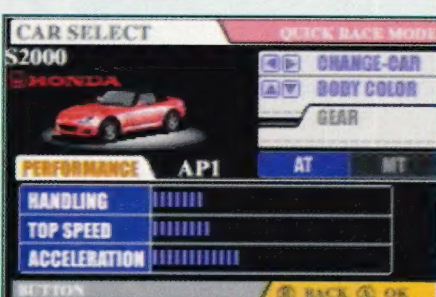
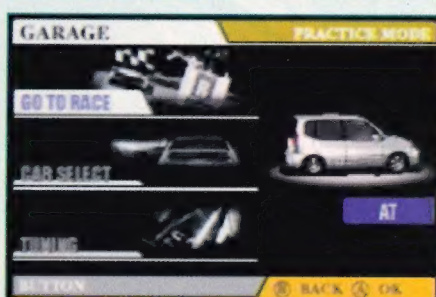
role of Bomberman. The Bomber Base has received a distress signal indicating that Planet Phantaron is in trouble. After a failed attempt by Bomberman Max to dissolve the crisis, he has also become a victim of an evil captor. All hope now lies on your shoulders to solve the mystery and rescue Max before the clock runs out.

The way you control Bomberman remains true to the original version, although in adventure mode you now get to roam through numerous landscapes, searching for clues and upgrading



Advance GTA

■ PUBLISHER: THQ ■ DEVELOPER: MTO ■ FORMAT: GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ RELEASE: JUNE 22



High-speed racing action will be screeching on to the Game Boy Advance when it is released alongside the handheld at the end of June. We dug our string-backed driving gloves out and got behind the wheel of the Japanese version of what will be called GT Advance - Championship Racing when it hits the UK.

The game has four difficulty levels and is split into a range of different game modes: Championship, Time Attack, Practice and a Link feature where up to four players can compete

added to your chosen motor.

Driving action in the game comes thick and fast, with even Beginner Class offering a hefty challenge for players. Your on-screen opponents are pretty mean drivers and really challenge your driving prowess, taking you on at corners and clinging to your bumper as you try to pull away. The Time Attack section of the game has got to be a highlight, as you try to beat your best time against ghost cars. It's a great buzz chasing your last attempt around the track - especially if it happens to be a hard record to beat.

Graphically the game does well. We're not talking GT3 here but there are some slight light and shade effects on the cars that add to your driving experience and highlight the

kind of detail that Nintendo's new toy is capable of. Sound offers the same kind of experience, although the screech that comes from slamming on your brakes does get on your nerves after a few hours of play.

With extensive gameplay, a great range of cars and replay value that will keep you motoring on even long-haul journeys, GT Advance is a great start for the racing genre on the GBA and graphically a good omen for all things wheel-related on the format to come.

"The replay value will keep you motoring even on those long-haul journeys"

at once via link cables. There are four classes of difficulty: beginners, middle, high-speed and professional.

Like many racing games, successful completion of the four tracks initially available to you unlocks tougher tarmac challenges. New unlockable parts for the cars, that range from the Toyota MR2 to the Nissan Cube, are awarded if you pull off a particularly good run. The additions are stored in the Tuning section of the Car select menu and make a noticeable difference to your on-track performance once



Final Fantasy X on Playstation2



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will you ever see beyond your fear?

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